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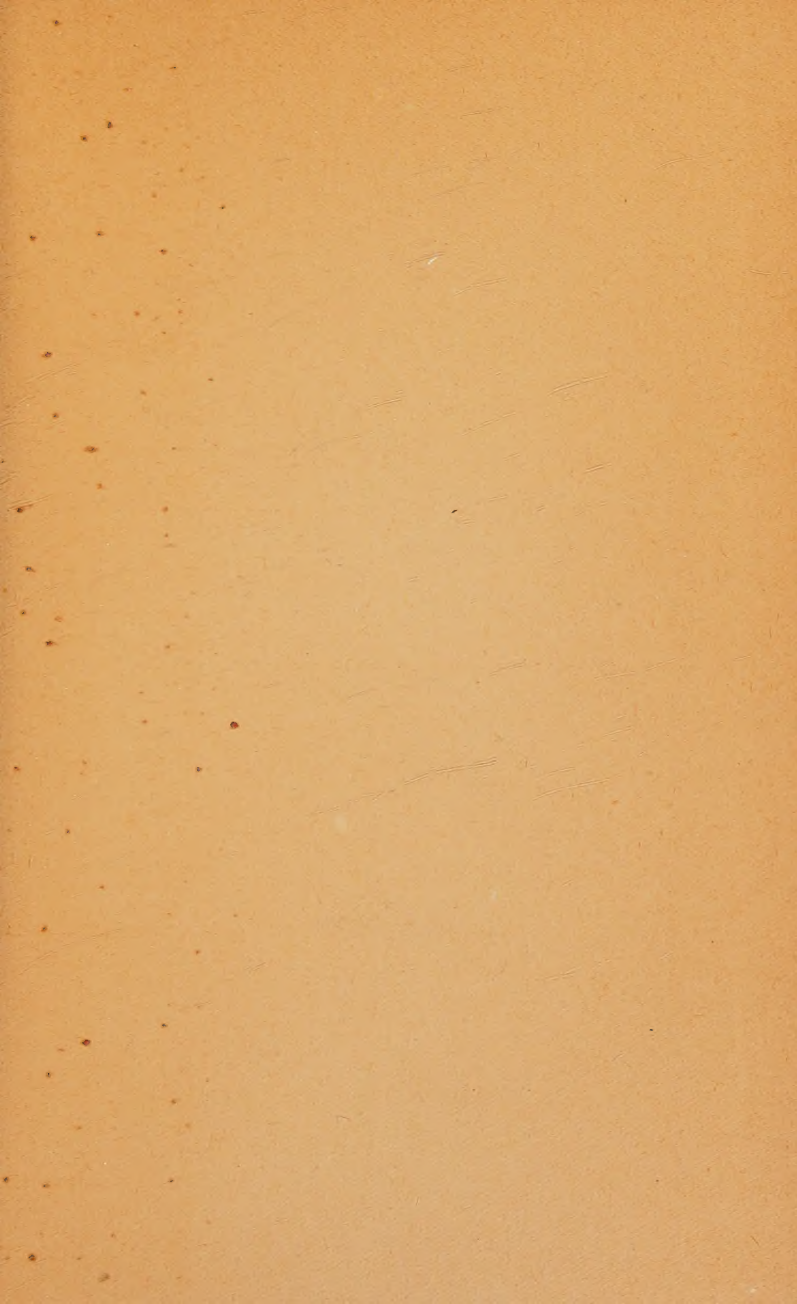
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OF THE INCARNATION
AND OTHER SERMONS

BY THE REV.
H. MAURICE RELTON, D.D.

LONDON
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PREFACE

OF these Sermons, Nos. 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10 are selected from those which have appeared in the pages of the *Church of England Newspaper* between the years 1920-1924. No. 2 appeared in the *Church Times*, September 30, 1921. Nos. 4 and 7 are printed for the first time. The first four have in mind what is popularly known to-day as "Modernism"; two deal with the practical testing of Faith in daily experience; and the last four treat of Eternal Life and what we may expect the other side of Death. The exact function of the sermon in the modern world may be a subject of dispute, but in any case the writer is convinced that there is room in the pulpit to-day for men who are prepared to embody in their message something of the fruit of sustained thinking and scholarship. A sermon is not less effective if a priest in its preparation, besides being diligent in prayers, has remembered that his ordination vow included also a promise that he would be diligent "in reading of the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same." In an age of intellectual unrest, when "our belief is perplexed by new learning, new teaching, new thought, when our faith is strained by creeds, by doctrines, by mysteries beyond our understanding," and when we need to pray therefore

that we may be saved "alike from stubborn rejection of new revelations, and from hasty assurance that we are wiser than our fathers," we may perhaps remind ourselves that emotional sentimentalism and rhetorical flourishes in the pulpit are no real substitute for such learning. If, as preachers of His Word, our ideal is first that "we may know Him and the power of His Resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings," we must learn to recognise as part of that fellowship, the mental strife involved in the effort "to hold fast a tradition with enlightened interpretation, to admit all fresh truth made known to us, and in times of trouble to grasp new knowledge really and to combine it loyally and honestly with the old." To recognise disciplined study as part of our vocation and incumbent upon us, however disinclined and ill-equipped for it we may be, in the necessary price we must pay if, in place of being blind leaders of the blind, we aspire to possess "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of our understanding enlightened that we may know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe."

H. M. R.

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THE CATHOLIC CONCEPTION OF THE INCARNATION

“ For while all things were in quiet silence,
And that night was in the midst of her swift course,
Thine Almighty Word leaped down from heaven out of Thy
royal throne,
A stern warrior into the midst of the doomed land.”

—*Book of Wisdom*, xvii. 14, 15.

IT has been suggested that Epiphany in its origin was a feast of Adoptionist complexion, possibly first instituted by the Ebionite Christians. Certainly Christmas as a Christian Festival was of much later date. Probably January 6th¹ was at first the commemoration of both the Nativity and the Baptism of Jesus. The fact that East and West diverged on the question of the exact date of our Lord's Birth led in course of time to the emergence of two festivals. In the East, Epiphany only was observed, and there is evidence in the fourth century of its being considered the chief of the festivals of the Church (*caput festorum*), with a preparatory season running back to the middle of December. In the canons of the Council of Saragossa (c. 380) we find it laid down that for twenty-one days before the Epiphany festival the faithful should refrain from

dancing and frequent the churches. No mention is made of Christmas, which apparently was unknown in Antioch, in St. Chrysostom's time. Easter and Epiphany were the chief festivals, and he tells us of the quite recent introduction of Christmas as a separate feast to commemorate the physical, as distinct from the spiritual, birth of Christ. We may gather the reason of this from his statement that it was not when Christ was born that He was manifest to all, but when He was baptised. When we remember that the earliest Gospel contains no record of the earthly birth and begins with the public ministry of our Lord, we can see how the Baptism gained prominence, and how, in the East, Epiphany would be so closely related to this last, which the Greek Fathers named the Theophany, the Day of Lights, possibly referring to the light which shone upon Jordan at the Baptism and the Voice which spoke from Heaven, "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It is easy to see how those who took an Adoptionist view of Christ's Person would emphasise His Baptism as affording the clearest evidence of His Divine illumination. It is easy also to understand that the Church in this case would have a theological interest in stressing the importance of the Christmas Festival as against the Epiphany. The latter, no doubt, in its origin commemorated both the Nativity and the Baptism; the physical and the spiritual births. But if heretical opinion tended to draw a clear distinction between these two, and

held that the Divine entered into Him at His Baptism and was not there at His Birth, the Church would have every reason to exalt Christmas at the expense of Epiphany, and to mark its belief in His Supernatural Birth in this way. In any case, whatever the real factors may have been which were at work in the origin and evolution of the two festivals, Epiphany and Christmas, in East and West, the fact is that in course of time Christmas triumphed over Epiphany, and if heretical views of Christ's Person played any part in the matter, we are safe in saying that the triumph of Christmas over Epiphany witnesses to the triumph of the Church's belief as to the true character of our Blessed Lord. Let us now consider these two views as to our Lord's Person.

THE ADOPTIONIST VIEW

According to the Adoptionist view, we have a man called Jesus; born of two human parents; brought up in pious surroundings; educated from his earliest days in the faith and religious customs of the Jews; inheriting thus the traditions and ideals, the promises and hopes of God's Chosen People. He lives a quiet, uneventful and obscure life until the soul-stirring campaign of John Baptist awakens within him the consciousness that God has been preparing him in these surroundings and through these influences to become nothing less than the embodiment of those hopes and the fulfil-

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ment of those promises which God had foreshadowed as the gift of Himself to the people whom He had chosen for His inheritance. Filled thus with a growing, if you will almost subconscious, apprehension of his privileged position as the Chosen One of Israel, he draws near to the Baptism of John, and this religious ceremony proves to be for him indeed the psychological moment for a rich spiritual awakening. He undergoes an intense spiritual experience, of a kind parallel to, though unequalled by, that of the mystics before and since. He emerges from the waters of Jordan, divinely endowed and God-filled to an extent never witnessed hitherto in the history even of God's prophets. God has chosen him and finds it possible to dwell in him as in no other. He thus becomes, to an extraordinary degree, a vehicle for the Divine manifestation. In him the long series of Divine Theophanies culminates. He is indeed God in a man made manifest. God came to dwell in him as in no other. He thus became the adopted son. True, there have been other "adopted sons" before and since, but never one to touch this man Jesus, since his communion with the Heavenly Father was of a kind so intimate and rich that he came to know God as an intense and unmistakable reality. This knowledge he communicated to his followers, and he succeeded in so impressing it upon them as a fact that in the end he succeeded in conveying it to them as an experience. They "caught" his experience and came to share joyfully in something of its reality

and intensity. We need not pursue the story in its sequel. Unfortunately, his conversion and his religious zeal for the righteousness of the God he worshipped led him into open conflict with the conventional religion of his time. He provoked the rulers to jealousy and he incurred the hatred of that most bigoted and deadly of all human evils, viz. priests. He was betrayed, and the end was an ignominious death. On the Cross he came to feel that the Divine Power which had entered into him at the Baptism, and had sustained him all through was weakening and in fact actually leaving him. So in his despair he cried, "My *dunamis*! My *dunamis*! My Power, My Power; My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" So he perished, leaving us the record of a noble and a godly life and an example that we might follow in his steps. True, there were many whom he had so impressed with his personality and spiritual energy that they could not bring themselves to believe that all was over. They dwelt upon the closing scenes of his life and recalled to memory so vividly the impression he had made upon them, that, in the end, the inner circle began to suffer from hallucinations. There were some who actually affirmed that he was alive again, and, in fact, this belief grew to such dimensions that in the early days of the Church a Gospel of the Resurrection was started and a community formed upon the basis of the assumption that he was not dead but alive again for evermore. We, as historical students, can

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indeed trace the rise and growth of this "myth," and to-day we are enabled to distinguish, if we are wise, between the kernel and the husk. A physical resurrection is, of course, ruled out. We can appreciate, however, the essence of the ethical and spiritual truth which underlies the Gospel story of the so-called "miracle" of the resurrection. We can see what it means. Is it not a faith which refuses to accept defeat at the hands of death and which sees in spiritual values an immortality quite independent of the lives of the particular individuals in whom those values are temporarily exhibited? The triumph of life over death; of good over evil; of light over darkness; the great moral principle of life through death; fuller life through sacrifice; the ethical law that he who would bless others must needs himself bleed; the spiritual transmutation of suffering—these are the kernel of the Easter message which is quite independent of the historical fact or fiction of the Empty Tomb, and remains unshaken long after modern historical criticism has destroyed belief in a bodily resurrection of Jesus, and modern psychology has taught us to read aright the true story of the spiritual pilgrimage of Jesus shorn of those crude trappings and impossible fables which had come to be associated with it in the course of history and which we can account for quite easily and naturally in the light of our knowledge of the workings of the human mind and man's seemingly incurable tendency to credulity and superstition.

Such in substance, so we suggest, is the meaning and outcome of that view of the Person of Christ which we have called the Adoptionist, and which we have endeavoured to present in its more modern and up-to-date form.

POLES ASUNDER

What would we more? Nothing, surely, except to remind ourselves that if this, or anything approaching this, is Adoptionist Christology, whether in its ancient or its modern garb, it is poles asunder from what the Catholic Church taught concerning our Lord's Person and what it still believes to be true. What, then, by way of contrast, is the Catholic conception of the Incarnation? Let us try to sum up the difference in a sentence. It is the difference between the conception of the Incarnation of God the Son in a personal life and the manifestation of God Himself in a person's life. The one is a real Incarnation of a pre-existing Divine Person; the other the climax of the Divine immanence in a human person called Jesus. Between these two conceptions there is a great gulf fixed and no compromise can bridge it.

Let us look a little more closely at the Catholic teaching. The Church believes that He Who existed with God eternally before all worlds were made; He Who in the beginning was the Word and Who was with God and Who was God; at a certain point in the temporal sequence we call history, in

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the fullness of time, for us men and for our salvation, came down from Heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man. He Who was one with the Father as touching His Godhead, moved by an all-compelling Divine Love, issuing in an infinite compassion for a world alienated and spiritually distressed, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor. It is the story of a Divine condescension. Seeing our distress, the all-powerful Word leaped down from heaven, out of the royal throne. It is thus not a case of a highly-favoured individual man being raised to the status of divinity or revealing in himself fully the natural divinity of the human sons of the Most High. It is the case of the only-begotten Son becoming other than He was, whilst continuing at the same time to be Himself. He Who was God became incarnate. The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

IF HE IS PURELY HUMAN

If we are dealing with one who is purely human and upon whom at his Baptism the Divine descends, then the question of a Virgin Birth is clearly irrelevant, in fact it constitutes an insuperable obstacle, since what is purely human can only be the product of two human parents, issuing from them in the natural course of human generation. To introduce a miraculous birth here into such a picture

is to complicate matters and to bring in needless superstition and myth. On the other hand, if the Catholic conception is true, the Virgin Birth, far from being an irrelevancy, becomes vital. Why? Surely because the utmost we can ever get from Joseph and Mary is a human Jesus. We can never by this channel produce the birth of God the Son. Only by some such means as is suggested in the mystery of the Virgin Birth can we imagine how the entrance of the pre-existent Divine Son into our world could be accomplished. If He Who was God the Son before His Incarnation is to become man at a point in time and is to undergo a second birth, subsequent to His eternal begetting, the way such a thing can be accomplished is surely adequately conveyed to our minds—however mysterious and baffling the thing in itself may be—by some such process as is suggested when we recall the angel's words to Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God." We may join with the Blessed Virgin if we like in exclaiming, How shall this be! but one thing certainly is clear, viz. that a merely human birth from Joseph and Mary cannot possibly account for it, if what was born was what the Church believed It. to be, nothing less than Very God of Very God. We do not, in this, commit ourselves to the assertion that it is impossible to believe in the Incarnation without believing necessarily at

the same time in the Virgin Birth. We do say, however, that intellectually, it is very difficult to accept the Incarnation whilst at the same time denying the Virgin Birth.

PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

It may be said, however, that in all this we are dealing not with fact but with interpretation ; not with history but with dogma. We have, so we are told, an historical event, the birth and life of Jesus ; we have also, subsequent to this, an interpretation of a highly disputable character which seeks to transform what historically is plainly and unmistakably a human person into what faith infers to be a revelation of a pre-existing Divine Christ or Heavenly Son of God. The one is fact ; the other is speculation. Now we cannot here discuss the philosophical issues raised by this attempt to separate fact and meaning. Is there any fact apart from its meaning ? A whole problem of the philosophy of history is here raised. We cannot deal with it now, but we will say this much, It is quite illegitimate to fix one of two interpretations upon the so-called " fact " and to name that the " historical certainty " in contrast to what we hold to be an equal legitimate interpretation which is dismissed as " dogma." The " Jesus of History " is not necessarily the " human Jesus " of Adoptionist Christology. The " fact of Christ " may equally well have been in reality the Jesus of Catholic

Christology. We must not label the one "historical" and refuse this last word to the other. The Church confronted by the phenomenon of the life of Christ accepted that interpretation of it which it was felt could alone do justice to its real meaning. The Church rejected the Adoptionist interpretation as inadequate. You cannot label this last interpretation as "history" and rule out the Church's interpretation as "theology." The utmost you can do is to recognise the two interpretations as possible elaborations of the one fact and call them respectively a "reduced" and a "full" Christology. The attempt to create a gulf between the "Jesus of History" and the "Christ of the Creeds" is not a scientific method of work, if we claim to be impartial historians. It is unscientific to divorce the Gospels from the Acts and to cut off both from the Creeds and the Conciliar Definitions. These are as much a part of the historical movement as is the life of Jesus in the days of His flesh, and you cannot read that life with any degree of intelligent appreciation, as an historical student, without considering these later documents as containing what the Church concluded was the true key to its interpretation of the fact of Christ. The very men who were the authors of the Gospels (including the earliest) were themselves sharers in the Church's belief in the true deity of Christ, and those who later on formulated the Chalcedonian Christology expressly repudiated the suggestion that they were adding

something new to the Church—belief ; on the contrary they claimed to be handing on that which the Church had believed and taught from the first. Thus Catholic Christology has the prior claim to be called “ historical,” and the Adoptionist interpretation is a later interpretation which the Church saw fit to reject.

THE ISSUES AT STAKE

Why ? We have said that between these two interpretations of the significance of our Lord’s Person there is a great gulf fixed which no compromise can bridge. Is this really so ? Let us answer the question by a consideration of the issues at stake.

If we have to choose between these two hypotheses on the assumption, for the sake of argument, that they are both equally legitimate interpretations of an historical fact, then our choice must be guided by the test of experience.

Assume the Adoptionist Christology to be true. What follows ? We have the record of a beautiful life which in its day and generation was a revelation of God. To the privileged inner circle of pious Jews in the first century of our era, the light shone and their skies were illuminated by its glory. Whilst he lived, men walked in his light, and caught from him something of the glory of God revealed through him. But now ? What of our skies ! Is the light still there ? If he were human, then he

had his day and ceased to be. He is indeed caught in the meshes of mere temporal history. All that remains for us is an historical record of a wondrous life once lived long ago in Palestine. We read of it in the faded pages of the past. The Church has cherished his memory, and through the centuries handed down the story. As we read it again to-day something of the thrill of it touches us afresh. In imagination we can live over again the scenes on the lake of Galilee ; the walks in the streets of Jerusalem. It is a fair and a glorious story. Will it suffice us ? If it is merely history, what of its permanence ? If it is the story of the climax of the Divine immanence in a person's life, then the manifestation ceased with that person's death. When the historical Jesus gave up the Ghost the *Dunamis* departed ; the Light went out. The utmost left for us is the after-glow, which we can still see faintly reflected upon the pages of history. Is it enough ?

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Consider our present needs. Here we are in this twentieth century with the dark clouds of doubt and unbelief all around us. Here we are in the midst of a political and international chaos with men's hearts failing them for fear. Is the light still in our skies ? It cannot be if our Christology yields us nothing but a transitory human Jesus through whom once Light was revealed.

Test the hypothesis in the face of present religious

experience. We seek refuge from a cold and bitter world within the warmth of a sanctuary. We draw near in doubt and anxiety ; in weakness and sin ; in failure and perplexity. Will meditation upon a fact of the past help us, and memories of what took place long ago be of any avail ?

What really happens is this. When in penitence and faith, with our needs so pressing, our sins so black, our outlook so dark, and our hearts so full of misgiving, we draw near to the Throne of Grace and cast ourselves down with a cry for Light—lo ! His All-Powerful Word leaps again down from heaven, out of His royal throne, and tabernacles once again in our midst, and makes Himself known to us in the Breaking of the Bread ! This is no reminiscence of a faded Christ : no recalling to mind the image of an absent Master. This is the vital experience of an ever-present, all-powerful, all-glorious living Lord ! Then we know that the glory is still in our skies.

How can this be except the one we worship be independent of the time sequence, and therefore is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever ? Is not His Deity the only guarantee we can have of His permanence ? If He were the All-Powerful Word seated upon His throne before the worlds were made and then in the fullness of time came down from Heaven in the first century A.D., He can again tabernacle with men in this twentieth century. If His Light shone in the skies of Palestine in the year A.D. 1, it can still shine in our midst to-day.

The test of its truth is not only the fact of a record of its experience in all the long and chequered history of the Church ; it is also found in our own lives to-day. We go to the sanctuary weak, we return strong ; we go unclean, we leave cleansed ; we draw near in darkness, His Light shines : the Word to-day is made flesh and dwells amongst us and we behold His Glory : the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father ; full of grace and truth. What would we more ?

Nothing, surely, except to say that of the two possible interpretations of this fact, our lived experience settles at any rate for us which of the two we accept and accepting find ourselves at one with the Catholic Church of all the ages, and, as truly wise men, join with all saints in the Adoration of the Lamb.

If He were not the Eternal Word, but a temporary individual man, then we have no guarantee of the reality or the permanence of God's manifestation of Himself through him. In other words, if Christmas be not a fact, Epiphany may be an illusion. The reality of Epiphany is guaranteed by the truth of Christmas.

“ For while all things were in quiet silence, and that night was in the midst of her swift course, Thine Almighty Word leaped down from heaven, out of Thy royal throne.”

Then let us sing unto the Lord a new song, for He hath done, and still to-day in our midst is doing, marvellous things !

JESUS—GOD AND MAN

"I, John . . . was in the isle that is called Patmos for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. . . . And I turned to see the voice which spake with me. And having turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks ; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. And his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow : and his eyes were as a flame of fire ; and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace ; and his voice as the voice of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars ; and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword ; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not ; I am the first and the last, and the Living one ; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."—*Revelation* i. 9-18.

SUCH was the vision vouchsafed to one who was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day : a vision derived from the supernatural illumination of the finite mind and heart under conditions hard to account for by human reason, but perfectly familiar to the saints who speak to us with a knowledge, the source of which causes them no qualms of doubt, and the validity of which is never questioned by them. The vision is but another confirmation of the warning that no man can call Jesus Lord, but in the Holy Spirit. Faith has its springs in the eternal, and earth's testimony to

the Divine in human life finds its source in the heavenlies. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah : for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father Which is in Heaven."

I.

And what are the contents of this vision ? In essence, surely, an identification of Jesus of Nazareth with God in Heaven. The seer recognises a continuity of being between the one like unto a son of man who had tabernacled amongst men, and Him Who is and Who was and Who is to come. The Living One, the Source and Fountain of all Being, the I am, the Alpha and the Omega, is One Who speaks of Himself as identically the same, *Who was dead* and now lives.

Here we have the continuity between the Jesus of the Gospels and the Christ of history : the pre-existent and the eternally present. It is an identification which causes the seer no qualms of doubt or misgiving. He beholds the Manhood of the Crucified Nazarene enthroned on high, the centre of Heaven's worship, glorified indeed with a glory that almost breaks human language in the telling, but, none the less, there he sees sufficient to assure him that in this glorified Being is the Jesus Whom he had known in the flesh—Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Dwell for a moment on this stupendous fact. The seer does not contemplate two distinct Personalities : he has not in mind a Man called Jesus

Christ and Another Who dwelt in Him, and, at the same time, was not He. Nestorianism is bankrupt in the face of this identification. Adoptionism finds no standing-ground here. The pre-Incarnate Logos, the Man Jesus, the risen Christ, the Lord of Glory—all are one, one in identity and continuity of Being. An ontological relationship alone can do justice to the vision. Jesus, in His claim—I and the Father are One—is vindicated. A Trinitarian formula is demanded as alone adequate to do justice to the facts. The finite mind despairs of describing the mystery, and stumbles in its efforts to formulate the truth in a way adequate to safeguard it from the host of errors and half-thought-out hesitations which inevitably arise when this identity of Being must be postulated, and the whole question of God as One must be thought out afresh in the light of it.

How vast the contrast between the Gospel portrait and the Christ of the Creeds! Yet the seer apparently does not feel the difficulty. Faith grasps it quite simply, yet reason is driven to metaphysics in order to find a terminology adequate to its full content.

To-day there is a clamorous demand for an approach to the problem from the starting-point of the Jesus of the Gospels. The approach from the point of view of the seer is ruled out. We must all be empiricists. We must start with something certain. We must accept the results of a critical investigation of Gospel documents. Take what

they yield to us of solid fact—historical events—a Life lived in an obscure corner of the earth's surface called Palestine, a Life which was at least human—the story of One Who hungered as we do, was weary, thirsty, limited in His outlook by a Jewish environment and a Jew's upbringing and training. Here, so we are told, we are on sure ground. Now, O Englishman ! practical above all things, spurner of day-dreams, doomed by nature to possess an Antiochene mind, commence the task of seeing in this despised Nazarene the Son of God !

How many, even in the days of His Flesh, proved equal to the task ? How many, closer to Him than we can ever be, hearing His voice, looking into His eyes, handling Him, beholding His mighty works—how many rose to Faith's insight into the Fact ? A St. Peter almost stumbled into the truth ! Here and there one or two felt strangely moved by His Presence, and felt their hearts burn within them as He spake unto them by the way—yet dawning faith such as this simply could not stand the awful shock of the crude realism of the Cross ! They all forsook Him and fled. Had the tragedy ended on Good Friday, the Christian Church had never survived. No, the Gospels are not sufficient—the picture of the Human Jesus with all its winsome charm cannot kindle a faith strong enough to face a Cross. Nor were the first disciples left to do so. He, Who was dead, rose again ! On the fact of the Empty Tomb and the Resurrection of the Lord,

faith took its spring and found the source of its strength. On the Risen Christ Christianity is founded, not simply upon the Jesus of the Gospels.

Why will we persist in ignoring the simple fact that the writers of these very Gospels were themselves believers? Why ignore the standpoint from which they approached the whole question as to Who Christ was? Their starting-point is that of the seer of Patmos. In the full light of their new-found belief in His Deity they set to work to review the record of His earthly life. The marvel is that they succeeded so well in their faithful delineation of the human Jesus in spite of their knowledge as to Who He really was! Consider the truthfulness of their narratives from this standpoint! When they might so easily have glossed over the things which have proved in every age since such a stumbling-block to faith! Why record the story of the earthly limitations, the lowly birth, the poverty and obscurity, the days of toil, the wanderings, the weariness, the hunger, the tears; the opposition, the malice and hatred that pursued His course; nay, above all, the story of the Cross? Why record it all so minutely, so vividly painful to pious eyes—why, indeed? The answer is not far to seek. Their faith had opened out before them a new world—the transvaluation of all values! A new and astounding conception of God was theirs. It was the result of their belief in the Deity of their Master. They must proclaim it at all costs. Run through the streets and tell men: “God is just

like that ! ” “ A new conception of God ! ” “ God is like Jesus ! ” *God* it was, in human form, Who tabernacled amongst us. We beheld His glory. In what did it consist ? How did He reveal His attributes—Omnipotence, Omniscience, Omnipresence ? “ Most chiefly in showing mercy and pity.” And the proof ? Look what He did when on earth amongst men whom He loved ! What was His life on earth like ? One long story of self-effacement ; one long tale of self-sacrifice. He went about doing good. He healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, forgave sinners, took pity upon the outcasts and degraded, revealed His holy love in action. That is the point. These writers, convinced that the Incarnation was a fact, looked back upon the earthly life of the Incarnate Lord and saw in it a wondrous revelation of the character of God—a marvellous record of what God is like. With this new conception of the Almighty in their minds, and burning itself into their hearts, they wrote the records we have in order that we also might share their discovery, and, with it, their joy.

When the seer looks into Heaven to behold God, what does he see ? At the very heart of Heaven is revealed a Lamb as though it had been slain ! The very essence of God’s character revealed in Christ is a Cross ! The very nature of God’s Being is sacrificial holy love, and the Gospel records are one long story of God in action. Seer and Gospel writers share this vision, and, in the

light of it, they wrote the story of God's life upon earth that we might know, once and for all, what God is, and seeing the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, might with them worship the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world !

II.

There are two possible, and, I submit, equally legitimate methods of approach to these Gospel narratives.

We can approach them with the presupposition in our minds that therein is contained the record of a merely human life. The result will be a long and strained effort, probably unsuccessful, to confine the portrait of Jesus of Nazareth within the limits of the merely human. He escapes the categories of thought within which we seek to enclose Him, and, by escaping, upsets our presuppositions and leaves us puzzled and baffled. It is beyond words difficult from this starting-point—that of the Antiochene school—to arrive at the Church's belief in His essential Deity. At the most, we reach the impression of a great Ethical Teacher, a Spiritual Genius, a marvellous Personality, One in Whom the Spirit of God dwelt as in no other ; One Who exhibits in Himself the maximum degree of the Divine Immanence in human life. Divine, therefore, in a unique degree, if you like, with a conferred Divinity, not His Own by right of nature, and a Divinity which other sons of men have shared,

and can share, possibly, if not probably, to the same extent. Such a belief in the Divinity of Christ—let us be quite clear about it—is not what the Church teaches, and falls short of the truth which is enshrined in Nicene and Chalcedonian Christology. It means, in the last issue, that the central constituent of His Being—the Ego, the Personality, whatever you like to call it—is human. The problem, then, is to define the relation of this human Man to God, and you end either in Nestorianism or in an inverted monophysitism which calls the human the Divine in terms of time and space, and issues in Pantheism.

On the other hand, it is equally legitimate to approach the Gospels from the point of view of the seer of Patmos. They are then seen to be the record of God in action—a real Incarnation—God tabernacled in the Flesh—God in Human Form—the Infinite and the Eternal manifested in time and space. He Who was before all time and will be long after time has ceased, at a certain point in time, without ceasing to be God, became Man and lived a human life. It was not a question of this Pre-existent One entering into and taking possession of the being of a person already there on the earth, it was not the Logos descending upon a man—Jesus of Nazareth—but of God, Who for us men and for our salvation, came down from Heaven, and was Incarnate by the Holy Ghost, of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man. The central constituent of His Being, then, was Divine. This is the

Alexandrine standpoint, and from it arises the whole Christological problem: How could God lead a truly human life? If His Personality were Divine, could He possibly live a limited and finite human life, whilst at the same time continue to uphold the universe in the hollow of His hand?

The Church has faced this issue and answered it in the Creeds. No answer can ever solve the mystery. The thing is incredible, stupendous, beyond words!

Think, Abib!

The very God! think Abib; dost thou think?
 So the All-Great were the All-Loving too—
 So, through the thunder comes a human voice
 Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here.
 Face, My hands fashioned, see it in Myself.
 Thou hast no power, nor may'st conceive of Mine,
 But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,
 And thou must love Me Who have died for thee!"
 The madman saith He said so; it is strange.

Incredible! Yes, to the intellect, but where reason recoils intuitive faith leaps to its acceptance:

I believe! Help Thou mine unbelief.

Faith accepts the fact. Reason must go on to ponder the mystery and face anew the whole problem of the true relation of the Human and the Divine in the light of the revelation of their union in the Person of Christ.

III.

The acceptance of the seer's vision and its teaching as to the continuity of Being between the Jesus of the Gospels and the Christ of God—the recognition of the central constituent of His Person

as Divine—does not drive us to Apollinarianism nor to Monophysitism. The Church defines the problem in Chalcedonian Christology. There is a Catholic interpretation of that Christology in the doctrine of the Enhypostasia which saves us from a belief in the Impersonality of the Manhood of our Blessed Lord which would, of course, be Apollinarian. The acceptance of the belief that the merely human, as we know it, is not the truly and completely human, but that this latter was revealed for the first time in the Manhood of Christ, which was really and truly human because, and only because, it was Divine, enables us to escape the monophysite heresy and to see in the Person of Christ the revelation of the true relationship between the Human and the Divine. Moreover, we can further distinguish between His Divinity and ours; His humanity and ours. *His* Divinity or Deity, His own by right of nature, of the very essence of God Himself; *our* divinity, a conferred divinity, the reception of which does not make *us* semi-divine but *truly* human. *His* humanity, the truly human in its own right as God's humanity—the human element in God; *our* humanity, sinful, merely and *purely* human, becoming *really* human to the extent to which it receives an imparted grace—a Divine gift without which it must ever remain incomplete and defective.

There are many other profound truths centring round the doctrine of the Enhypostasia which time does not permit me to touch upon, but I have

said enough to assure believers that the Catholic does not fall behind the rationalist in his intellectual equipment for dealing with the problem of the Person of Christ, and least of all is he bound to accept the Modernist position when he includes in his belief the natural kinship between the human and the Divine which alone makes an Incarnation possible, whilst rejecting at the same time the contention that kinship and affinity amount to *identity*. Ultimately, for the Catholic, the human is human, the Divine Divine—an eternal distinction separates the Creator from the creature, even though the very fact of Creatorship on God's part, and our creation by Him, brings us to as close a relationship as is involved in kinship, affinity, and therefore communion. The doctrine of the Enhypostasia safeguards these great truths, and by it we escape from Pantheism in Christology and Humanitarianism with its issue in Unitarianism.

Granted the difficulties presented to reason by the Person of Christ, let us remember that faith, as for the seer of Patmos, so for us, is open, if we with him in prayer and worship seek the vision and are found in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. To such the real Presence is vouchsafed in such measure as to leave all doubts behind. At the sound of that Voice of gentle stillness we fall at His feet. He is made known to us in the Breaking of the Bread, and we receive the witness within us which enables us also to testify :

“ My Lord and My God ! ”

UNITY OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST

“ And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.”—*St. Luke* ii. 52.

THE Gospel picture of the childhood of Jesus is, surely, simplicity itself. The same is true of His whole earthly life. The portrait in its naturalness, consistency and absence of incongruities, strikes us as a first-hand impression from life. It is the record, ultimately derived from eye-witnesses, of the life of One whom they had seen and known, talked with and observed. It is a life-study and not the product of literary artifice. From first to last the Person of Christ in these narratives is a unity. Never once does the problem of the “two natures” obtrude itself upon our notice by any glaring incongruity. We have, in fact, a view of the reality derived from what the Italian philosopher, Croce, calls the æsthetic criterion of judgment, giving us a first-hand impression of the whole by sympathetic insight and intuitive apprehension. But now let the logical criterion of judgment be applied to the same reality. Let intellect get to work upon the same problem, and what a contrast! Instead of the

simplicity of the Gospel picture, we have the immeasurable complexity of the Athanasian Creed ; in place of the Gospel language, which a child can understand, we get the metaphysical terminology of the Chalcedonian definition. Life is translated into Creed—living Truth frozen into Dogma.

Being very man of the substance of the Virgin Mary, His Mother, He must needs grow in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and men ; being Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, how can He pray for a Divine Grace of which He Himself is the fountain-source, or plead in an agony for the execution of a Divine Will of which He Himself is presumably the possessor ?

Given the Church's belief in His true Deity ; given the Gospel narratives as recording a real Incarnation—God Himself leading a truly human life—then how can One who is all-wise grow in wisdom ; how can One whose dwelling-place is the supra-mundane and Whose Being is transcendental live within the limits of our terrestrial existence and taste of our finitude ?

So does intellect present us with a whole series of seeming incompatibilities and logical antinomies. So does Rationalism confront us with the Two-Natured God-Man, and challenge the Church with the Christological problem.

The Gospel narratives are not responsible. They present us with no religious monstrosity. We find there no picture of a fictitious amalgam of an abnormal kind. The supernatural in His Person

is there so naturally revealed, so essentially native to His truly human life, that it almost escapes notice until attention is drawn to it by the mind, striving to form its picture of the kind of Person it imagines Christ to have been as combining in Himself seemingly incompatible and conflicting attributes. Intellectual reflection upon the narratives, and not the narratives themselves, is responsible for the difficulties. Not the life of Christ as He lived it, but subsequent reflection and analysis of the constituent elements of the picture create for intellect the Christological problem.

AN INTERESTING PARALLEL

We have an interesting parallel in the problem of the relation between mind and brain, soul and body. Our knowledge of ourselves, derived from our own life as we actually live it, reveals to us the fact that we are indissolubly one. We have no knowledge of mind apart from body, or body apart from mind. But let intellect approach the problem, and what a contrast! Physiology presents us with the characteristic attributes of material substance; psychology details psychic states. What possible relation can there be between two such disparate entities as cerebral processes and consciousness? Hence all kinds of theories to account for the relation between the two. Is it by interaction, with its suggestion of an insoluble dualism between what is essentially "extension" and what

is immaterial? Will psycho-physical parallelism help us any better? Must we not seek logical consistency by a denial of one or other factor in the problem? Is not the easy solution to interpret mind in terms of matter, or matter in terms of mind?

So does intellect create its own difficulties. So does it seek to dychotomise a reality which is an original unity; so does it proceed to divide up into mind and matter what is in fact given to us in living experience, not as an original diversity, but as an organic whole. And, having separated in thought what in fact is never found divided, intellect proceeds to discuss the problem of how reunion between mind and brain, body and soul, is conceivably possible!

THE CHRISTOLOGICAL PROBLEM

So with the Christological problem. To the actual life of Christ as He lived it, human and divine were indissolubly united and functioned as one. The subsequent question as to how they could do so is a problem intellect creates for itself, and because it cannot solve it we have all kinds of Christological theories put forward, and also, in the interests of logical consistency, an effort made to explain the divine in terms of the human, or the human in terms of the divine; an attempt, in fact, to satisfy reason at the cost of truth.

Ultimately the Christological problem baffles

the intellect, the Person of Christ is the bankruptcy of human logic, and it is better for us to acquiesce in this rather than to seek to reach intellectual consistency by overlooking, ignoring or explaining away one or other essential factor in the problem.

The Church in its creeds and dogmatic formulæ offers no intellectual solution of the problem. It is blamed for elaborating its belief in terms of the metaphysical categories of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries. It had to do so because intellect insisted upon asking questions, and, had the Church remained silent, its silence would have been misinterpreted. Make no mistake. From the intellectual standpoint the Christological problem is a metaphysical problem. A belief in the true Deity and perfect humanity of the God-Man is a claim to interpret ultimate reality in terms which are not less than personal and involves an interpretation of the cosmic process and human teleology in terms of One who was and is and is to come, the Almighty. The attempt to express the problem in terms of ethics and spiritual values is doomed to failure, unless those values are held to be absolute values. Thus, Christianity cannot avoid metaphysics, if it is to be true to its deepest convictions concerning the question who Christ was and is.

The Church, however, in the Chalcedonian definition offers no intellectual solution. It is content to state the problem and to elaborate the essential data. It says, in effect, to the intellect,

“If you must speculate; if you must seek intellectual consistency; then you may do so, within the limits laid down by the data themselves.” So Modern Churchmen are free to attempt to solve the Christological problem, if they can, and provided that their intellectual solutions do no violence to the facts.

TERTULLIAN'S FAMOUS PHRASE

Is such a solution possible? We think not. Fresh investigation of the problem may give us a firmer grasp of the difficulties, but ultimately, I think, we shall be driven back to Tertullian's famous dictum, *Credo quia absurdum*—the stumbling-block of the rationalists! We must believe, not in order to understand, but because of the very absurdity of our belief when judged by the human criterion of the logical judgment. The problem, in other words, is beyond our intellect. There is no way of proving rationally the Deity of Christ. There are, on the contrary, many ways of proving rationally the impossibility of His ever having appeared on this earth as the God-Man. Within the limits of rationality Christ's Person cannot be confined. Is there any other way of approach to enable us to get nearer to the truth we seek? I think that there is. It is the way of life, rather than the way of intellectual reflection upon life. The difference is that I have already suggested in drawing attention to Croce's distinction between

the two methods of approach to truth : that of the æsthetic criterion and that of the logical criterion of judgment.

Instead of intellectual reflection upon the problem of Christ's Person, approaching it *ab extra*, there is the way of intuitive apprehension by faith. The supreme triumph of reason is to cast doubt upon its own validity as the only criterion by which we can gain true knowledge. This is the message of a great modern Spanish thinker who, in his recently published book, *The Tragic Sense of Life*, despairing of a rational solution and justification of our beliefs, bids us seek another way, the way of faith. My suggestion is that the difficulties in the Christological problem are really the creation of the intellect, and, as such, they form no justification for the abandonment of our belief. "Metaphysics," says Mr. Bradley, "is the finding of bad reasons for what we believe upon instinct, but to find these reasons is no less an instinct." We must try, then, to use our reason in the effort to understand our faith. But if we fail, we are not justified in abandoning our faith. Lord Haldane, commenting upon Bradley's remark, says that what the philosopher is really warning us against is pedantry, the undue exaltation of the abstract mind. So in Christology. All these discussions are really disputes over difficulties which the intellect has itself created. May they not be pure abstractions, having no real existence except in the minds of the intellectuals? Why not, then,

leave these learned gentlemen to continue to dispute amongst themselves, whilst we, simpler folk, by another road, go on to a nearer apprehension of the Christ whom we seek ?

If intellect fails to give us direct knowledge of the truth, there is another road open. We feel it in our very bones. "The rest may reason and welcome. 'Tis we musicians know!" "Bradley's warning," says Lord Haldane, "is one which those who are disposed to regard lightly the faith of simple minds would do well to bear in remembrance. For that faith is in itself a correction of abstractions. It is the sense of the fuller significance of experience."

SIMPLE FAITH

Simple faith, then, may be nearer to the truth than all the efforts of the intellect can ever bring us. In revolt against the efforts of the intellect to present us with such an analysis of the Christological problem as to convince us that our belief involves intellectual bankruptcy, we are moved to an activity of our whole personality, and faith takes its leap where intellect bids us falter. In life, and not by intellectual reflection upon life, do we discover what life is. If the Gospel narratives are nearer to the truth because they give us a first-hand impression of His life as He lived it, we can take the hint. We can abandon speculation about Christ, and try in our own lives to live like He did. Let us strive to bathe ourselves in His Spirit ; live intensely the life of self-sacrificing devotion to

duty and the love of the brethren ; thus striving to reach up to the level of the ethical and spiritual values which He revealed to us in His life—tasting, as we shall then do, of eternal life in time and space—what will be the result ?

We shall make the great discovery ! We shall find Him. We shall hear His voice ; feel the breath of His Spirit within us. We shall have, not knowledge about Him gained by intellectual study *ab extra*, but knowledge of Him by personal acquaintance. Where intellect halts, faith takes its leap, and by an intuitive apprehension and personal communion finds Him in whom we live and move and have our being. The Christ thus discovered in religious experience by faith will be One too great for our intellectual categories of thought, too vast for our understanding, too sublime and mysterious for our rationalistic picture-frames, too transcendent for our mental imagery and our puny finite minds to take in. We shall be lost in the great beholding ! Seeing Him as He really is, we shall learn to appraise at their true value those mental abstractions of the critics, presented to us as true portraits, such, *e.g.* as the “ Humanitarian Jesus,” the “ Ethical Teacher,” the “ Religious Enthusiast,” the “ Æsthetic Jesus,” the “ Eschatological Wonder-Worker ”—all such pictures representing view-points gained by intellectual contemplations of the Reality *ab extra* will be seen to be fatally infected by relativity and simply distorted aspects of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, the Living

Lord as faith knows Him. By faith we shall get such a sympathetic contact and personal touch with Him as to discover One who is transcendent above all our partial glimpses of different aspects of His character—One, in short, too big for our understanding, but worthy of our worship ; too vast to be gauged by any intellectual effort of ours in seeking to apprehend Him, but real enough to be known in prayer as what He is—"My Lord and My God."

FAITH'S LEAP IN THE DARK

So when tormented by the demons of intellectual doubt and the assaults of rationalism, faith must make its leap in the dark, and by a lived experience in communion with the all-pervading Spirit of the Living God gain an assurance through intuitive apprehension which is denied to it through the road of intellectual questioning.

Then let me feel how infinite around me
 Floats the eternal peace that is to be,
 Rush from the demons, for my King has found me,
 Leap from the universe and plunge in Thee,

Then thro' the mid complaint of my confession,
 Then thro' the pang and passion of my prayer,
 Leaps with a start the shock of His possession,
 Thrills me and touches, and the Lord is there.

Scarcely I catch the words of His revealing,
 Hardly I hear Him, dimly understand,
 Only the Power that is within me pealing
 Lives on my lips and beckons to my hand.

Whoso has felt the Spirit of the Highest
 Cannot confound nor doubt Him nor deny :
 Yea, with one voice, O world, tho' thou deniest,
 Stand thou on that side for on this am I.

THE STILLING OF THE STORM

"And on that day, when even was come, he saith unto them, Let us go unto the other side. And leaving the multitude, they take him with them, even as he was, in the boat. And other boats were with him. And there ariseth a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the boat, insomuch that the boat was now filling. And he himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion : and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish ? And he awoke, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye fearful ? have ye not yet faith ? And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him ?"—*St. Mark iv. 35-41.*

IN reading such an account as this in the earliest Gospel, the modern mind is bound to ask the question : Did it really happen ? And this question cannot be answered by an absolutely unbiassed mind, because no one can approach the subject without having a bias for or against the possibility of the miraculous. We have to remember, however, a point upon which stress may well be laid to-day, namely, that it is equally legitimate from a scientific point of view to approach the question of miracles with a bias in favour of their having been performed, as it is to consider them with a bias the other way. Moreover, apart from an examination of the historical evidence for or against,

it is as much the act of dogmatism to assert that "miracles do not happen," as it is to maintain that they did. If we accept Hume's dictum that no amount of positive historical evidence for a miracle can ever be sufficient to outweigh the inherent improbability of its having happened, we foreclose the question as to whether it did or did not occur by an a priori assumption of its incredibility.

The question in this case—as in the case of all the miracles recorded of Christ—is one which cannot be dissociated from the more ultimate and crucial problem as to who Christ was.

The question of the miraculous character of the "works" of Jesus and the historical validity of His "signs" is bound up with the problem of His personality. If He were the Son of God, the question as to what He could or could not do embraces a far greater range of possibilities than would be the case if He were only a child of man, the offspring of human parents, the son of a Galilean carpenter. If on other grounds we reach the conclusion that He was the Son of God, His miracles assume a normal place as the natural revealings of His Divine power.

What more natural than that the Son of God should command the winds and the waves and that they should obey him? If he were God's Vicegerent, the Agent in creation, the Eternal Word by Whom the worlds were made, what more natural than that He should bend the laws of Nature to His purpose and direct them in accordance with His

Will? Is it anything extraordinary that God Who "governs all things in heaven and in earth," should, when Incarnate, control the physical universe which He had created? The miracle is the most natural thing we should expect, if its Author were the One Whom we believe Him to have been. Not that we deduce His Divinity from the abnormal "signs" He wrought, but that we point to His "works" as the natural accompaniment of His Person.

Had we read that a mere man gave such a command, and that, in obedience to it, the winds and the waves were subdued, we might well doubt and rightly so. Such authority is not man's possession. The human mind might legitimately, therefore, refuse to accept any such statement as this Gospel contains, if Jesus were nothing more than a mere man, however highly endowed, or even, be it said, Divinely inspired. No! the difficulty vanishes if the personality of Christ is rightly apprehended, and the disciples' question answered as the Church has answered it.

"Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" If we accept the answer of St. Thomas: "My Lord and my God!" as the key to the interpretation of Christ's Person, the miracles He performed ought not to prove a stumbling-block to the believer to-day.

But in this case a new difficulty presents itself. If it is nothing but natural that the Son of God should command the winds and the waves, we may well ask,

on the other hand, *is it anything but supernatural that such an One should be found asleep in a boat?* Are we to believe that if we had been present that day on the Lake we should have seen God asleep!

Is it more extraordinary to be told that the Son of God exercised control over the forces of Nature than to read that God was asleep in a boat, located at a particular spot in time and space?

Surely the crucial miracle is here revealed in the fact of the Incarnation. What does it mean? God leading a truly human life! God the Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent, Lord of heaven and earth, King of kings, Invisible, Eternal, Whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain—such an One found confined within the limits of time and space, revealed in human form, experiencing all the vicissitudes and limitations of a truly human but none the less finite existence, God walking about the streets of Jerusalem, teaching on the shores of the Lake of Galilee, found one day asleep in a boat in the midst of a storm! Here, surely, is the incredible thing! Here, surely, is the most amazing point in this amazing story of the Stilling of the Storm! It is the miracle of the Incarnation—God in man made manifest—the Epiphany Glory of God in human form! This is the real difficulty! The human mind, even with its God-given faculty of imagination, can scarce grapple with this perplexing fact. And yet what is hidden from the wise and prudent is revealed unto babes. And the wise men from the East who journeyed to see

this great sight never revealed *their* wisdom to better purpose than when they worshipped Him thus manifested.

If now we will allow our minds to dwell upon this revelation of God in human form, the significance of it will throw a flood of light upon the meaning of our human life and God's purpose in its creation.

(1) How often have we been scorned by the wise because of our anthropomorphism ! We make God in our own image, so we are told. Our God is man-made, a being spun out of our too vivid and overwrought human imagination, a figment, a creation of the human in its efforts at idealism. We worship, so we are told, a God, man-made in his origin, and having no objective existence as a Reality apart from, and independent of, the human heart and mind which willed his existence. The Christian believer is indeed puzzled and perplexed by such suggestions, and cannot but feel the force of the arguments against the existence of the God Whom He worships. The unbeliever's scorn at the Christian's anthropomorphism seems at first sight justified and His argument unassailable. And yet a glance at the Babe of Bethlehem or the God-Man asleep in a boat gives us the answer. Is not the Incarnation the vindication of our anthropomorphism ? We make God in our image, it is true. But does not the Incarnation show that in so doing we are obeying a Divinely-implemented instinct ? We make God like man because man

at his highest is Godlike, and the Incarnation proved it. Why was it that when God wanted to manifest Himself to the world, He chose not the form of a flower, nor the likeness of any beast of the field, nor even the appearance of an angel, but "was made MAN?"

Why? Because the much-abused author of Genesis i., in spite of his abysmal ignorance of modern science, was right when he said, "In the beginning God," and not all the discoveries of modern psychology have yet succeeded in disproving his contention that God made man in His own image.

(2) And further, the Incarnation teaches us to look to the truly human life of Christ as a revelation of God to man and man to God, and therefore of the God-Man to men.

It means the vindication of an age-long belief that the truly human is not something alien from the nature of the Divine, but is God-like. It means that the Nature of God, though in its height and depth, length and breadth for ever transcending our powers of apprehension, is none the less akin to ours in its truly human content. It means that we are to look for the Revelation of the Divine in the Person of Christ not only in His difference from us but in His likeness to us. To see the Divine in the human as well as the human in the Divine.

It means, therefore, the consecration of our human life and our human relationships so far as they are truly human, and, in the light of the Incarnation,

we can never despise the highest and the best in our humanity nor think it of no account in God's sight.

If the desire of the human heart is to become God-like and the goal of all human aspiration is to become the sons of God, we shall achieve this to the extent to which we become not something other than the best in us, but this best consecrated and hallowed by the Christ-Spirit in us.

God's goal for man is not that he should become other than man, but man at his highest, and the type is set in the picture the Gospels reveal of the God-Man—truly man because truly God, perfect man because perfect God.

St. Paul's Christian experience as a man "in Christ" is therefore the experience for which we must strive, and in which we shall find the realisation in ever-growing measure of the purpose and goal of our lives.

(3) If, then, the truly human life of Christ is a revelation to man of the Godhead in terms of time and space, we have here the key by which we may search and find out the Divine in human life.

Where shall we look for it? In the extraordinary or abnormal physical phenomena? In the whirlwind or the storm? In the wonders of the Universe revealed by the discoveries of modern science? Possibly here we may see God stamped upon the works of His Hands. We may look to see His Beauty in the loveliness of a wayside flower or the glory of an Alpine sunset. We shall find the poet's

justification in the thought of all Nature as "the garment of God," and believe that the Invisible and Eternal Creator is ever revealing Himself through the material creation if only we have eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hearts to feel; but we shall not expect to find the fullest light in any other place except within man who is God's highest and noblest creation. Nature can and does reveal His Beauty, the sea and the storm reveal His wonders in the deep, the starry heavens above reflect His Glory, but it is left to the human heart to reveal the inmost essence of God, which is Love.

Where shall we find the Divine in human life?

Look at the friendship which can be true even unto death; look at the girl who turns her back upon the chance of a happy married life in order to devote herself to the care of an aged mother; see the light of human tenderness and love beaming from a young mother's eyes as she gazes upon a newborn child; catch a glimpse of the radiant face of one in whose heart love has dawned, bringing with it a new life, throwing a halo of glory over the commonplace drudgery of daily toil, and hallowing the trival round and common task; in such manifestations of human love we are taught to see a faint light, a dim reflection, a promise, a potency of that infinite and eternal Divine Love which is God. In the human—imperfect and sin-stained as it too often is—there lies the reflection

of the Divine. Wherever we see the human at its highest, wherever we meet it in its moments of aspiration and inspiration, there we see the Divine, even though it be "as in a glass darkly." And if the imperfect reflection in our human relationships disappoints and dissatisfies us, if it reveals an ideal seemingly impossible of human attainment, if it creates the vision of a goal we despair of reaching, then let us take comfort by a glance at the Incarnate Life of One Who, by living as He did and being what He was, actualised the ideal, lived the perfect life, "leaving us an Example that we should follow in His Steps," and more than that, is ever ready and eager to give us the Power—His Power—in the strength of which we can struggle on and "rise on stepping-stones of our dead selves to higher things."

See, then, in the Incarnation the consecration of all our truly human life, and a revelation of its Godlike character and worth in the sight of God.

(4) And, finally, what is the great stumbling-block to such an achievement of the highest and best in human life? The fact of sin. The fact that unlike the storm and the waves we do not obey His Voice. The storm and the waves had no alternative save to obey. But to us, the highest of His Creation, He has given the gift of free-will. Our obedience must be voluntary, willing, conscious. Herein lies the possibility and actuality of all that disharmony which mars and spoils our human life and thwarts the Divine purpose for them. Surely

here, *within us*, is a Storm which needs to be subdued !

And all true human happiness is achieved only as we let His Spirit govern us, even as He governs all things in Heaven and in earth. Our prayer in the light of the Incarnation must be that we may obey His Voice . . . that He will speak to our angry emotions, fits of temper, ungoverned passions and lusts, fierce ambition and greed of gain—that He will speak in terms of rebuke and command : “ Peace : be still.”

And if we will obey His Voice, we shall find within us a Great Calm . . . the calm of mind and heart which belongs only to those who have learned in all things to put His Glory first and their own needs second, to yield the governance of their lives into His Hands in simple faith and trust, to say, “ Not my will but Thine be done.” In such an inward Harmony shall we find a Peace the world can neither give nor take away, His Peace, a Perfect Peace which passeth all understanding. A Peace achieved within the human heart by a greater miracle than that involved in the subjection of the physical winds and waves of an external world necessarily and involuntarily obedient to His Word—a Peace all the more valuable because achieved at the cost of the willing submission of the human heart bowing down to One Whose Infinite Love created it for such a Fellowship as it gains thereby.

So does the Incarnate Christ—the Truth of

each and all—stand before us to-day. He bids us see in Him what we long to become ; He offers us a Joy which is His alone to give, ours alone to accept or reject, and in every relationship of our imperfect life His Voice is heard rebuking our rebellious self, “ Peace, be still.” . . . If conquering our human pride we hear and obey, within us shall be a great calm. So let our daily prayer be this :—

Calm soul of all things : make it mine
To feel amidst the city's jar
That there abides a Peace of Thine,
Man did not make and cannot mar.

THE PROBLEM OF DOUBT

"If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or whether I speak from myself."—*St. John vii. 17.*

IT is a significant fact that an age of comparative spiritual stagnation synchronises with a faltering grasp upon the essential beliefs of our Christian Faith. It is well, then, for us to go back to the method of Jesus. An examination of the Gospel narratives reveals in clear and striking outline His solution of the problem of doubt. It amounts to this :

That He refused to acquiesce in the demand for intellectual certitude. He resolutely withheld the demonstrable "sign" which was to compel belief and to dazzle the mind of man into a willing acceptance of His claims and His revelation. "Give us a sign—give us something so clear and unmistakable that none can dispute it or doubt it. Reveal before our physical senses such a phenomenon as cannot be questioned, such a proof as can be plain and acceptable to the most hardened sceptic, the most thorough-going agnostic." And His answer? "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh a sign . . . there shall no sign be given unto it."

He rules out a proof and an infallible truth of this kind and indicates another way to the desired goal. "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God or whether I speak from myself." The appeal, then, is not primarily to the intellect, but to the will.

Now the significance of this for our age is great. Jesus points men to the tremendous power of the human will and asks us to come to a decision. This is the way of all true and lasting achievement in human affairs. The men who makes history are the men who come to some definite, clearly-defined decision, to follow a certain path, and *follow* it. True there must be the time spent upon weighing the "pros" and "cons." Meditation and careful calculation of the weight of evidence in favour of or against a certain belief—heart-searching examination of the possible consequences of the decision—consequences which the Master has put before us in clear and unmistakable words. But if we persist in hesitations; if we falter and halt between two opinions; if we try to compromise and allow ourselves to be driven hither and thither by an opportunist wind, we achieve nothing. He appeals to the human will.

CREATIVE EVOLUTION

Now this is of immense significance to-day in view of the revolution in thought which is going on in our midst and the new "world view" opening

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out before us as the result of the new concept of Creative Evolution. The dogmatism of nineteenth century scientific "results" is bankrupt. The claims of Science to certitude are gone—the "facts" of to-day are the "fictions" of to-morrow. The thorough-going determinism—the so-called laws of Nature—the idea of an inevitable evolutionary progress—the old Darwinism, all these nightmares and bogies which have been hurled against religion in the name of "science," falsely so-called, are now discredited fictions. From the camp of science and philosophy a new doctrine is being preached. Creative evolution is to be the all-powerful concept of the years to come. We are now assured that "novelty" is a real thing occurring in the Universe and a place must be found for it in our philosophies. That which from the point of view of scientific determinism and unchanging laws was regarded as unthinkable and impossible is now acknowledged to be fact. That our experience never quite repeats itself, so we are now assured, is a simple psychical fact. So history is a real process and new things happen. The past is irrevocable and the future never exactly calculable. The idea that there can be nothing new under the sun—an idea so gratifying to the self-complacency of those who in the name of knowledge falsely so-called denounced miracles as impossible—is now to be abandoned for a frank recognition that the future is "open"—there is no "block-universe"—there is a creative power at work continually and a voice

from the heart of the cosmic process saying, "Behold I make all things new." Hence, in spite of the hatred of scientists and philosophers for "novelty," we are now assured that the old Christian idea of "creation out of nothing" is truer to the facts than the common sense and apparently self-evident maxim—*ex nihilo nihil fit*—out of nothing comes nothing. What was mere philosophic foolishness—the old Genesis story ridiculed out of the arena of intellectual thought and dismissed in favour of the conception of creation out of pre-existing material—is now acceptable in the light of our new concept of Creative Evolution. In this doctrine of creation out of nothing, a philosopher tells us now, the Christian Church was right and philosophy was wrong. "A world that generates novelty is creating itself out of nothing. It must be pronounced capable of arising out of nothing; only we must add that the creative process is still continuing." Precisely, and hence the significance of the latest production of that erratic genius, Bernard Shaw. Read his *Back to Methuselah*, and in the *Preface* you will find a masterly summary of the movements in thought which have taken place since Darwin's days and have left the old Darwinians high and dry as wrecks upon the shores of time.

What, then, is the significance of this new concept of Creative Evolution for our purposes? We may avoid the extremes to which its advocates are rushing whilst we seize upon the truth it contains. If there is a tireless, unceasing creative activity of

God, the Creator, at work in the Universe, and we can get some inkling of what His purpose is, then we can *by an act of will* become fellow-labourers with Him in the work of making a new world.

Instead of Bernard Shaw's non-ethical ideal of the will to live for ever, we can substitute an ideal for man of ethical and spiritual achievement in the spread of the Kingdom of God here and hereafter. In place of a life with the span of years of a modern Methuselah, we can bid men will to live gloriously in the endeavour to add to the sum total of man's true blessedness in the achievement of the good, the true and the beautiful in human life.

A REVELATION IN WORD AND DEED

God's revelation through Christ is a revelation in word and in deed. Read the life of Jesus Christ again in this connection and let us ask ourselves this question: Can we conceive of any better thing happening in our midst to-day than that the principles and ideals He advocated and worked for should be practised amongst men? Could a better good descend upon us than the establishment on a large scale of the Kingdom of God upon earth? If we can conceive of some better plan, well and good, let us bend our wills to its achievement. But if we cannot think of anything better, His call to all men of good will to-day is this: "The world in which you live is not what I want it to be. It lies in your power to make it a better

world if you really want to. If you will work and labour and sacrifice for this end, *it can be changed* and lo, I am with you all the days. I am here in your midst, unseen but ever-active, working with you and pouring out My life in sacrifice in you, for you, through you, for one object—that the earth may be filled with the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”

This is the appeal of Jesus Christ to-day. With our aid and with the exercise of the enormous power of human will in co-operation with His Will, the thing can be done: the life of man can be changed for the better: the Kingdom can be established, the principles of fellowship, co-operation, mutual aid, the reality of sacrifice and service in brotherly love can be revealed as dynamic activities, living expressions in human life of God's ideals for us. Hence He summons us one and all to the great adventure. Be up and doing.

DO SOMETHING

Now suppose we have men in our midst who are still hesitating—still held back by intellectual doubts and moral cowardice from joining up and doing their bit for the Kingdom. What message have we for them? Simply this: So long as you are content to tarry with the Jerusalem scribes and lawyers asking hard questions which cannot be answered and demanding proofs which will not be

supplied, the work suffers from your abstinence, the enemy makes headway because of your cowardice, the Kingdom tarries because of your inaction. Come to a decision. Do something. In the *Purgatorio*, next to the slackers and the slothful, and far removed from the light, the great Italian seer, Dante, placed the doubters and the sceptics.

If men *do* His Will what follows? They make the great discovery. They find that the Unseen Power behind and in and through the whole world and human life is not passive, inactive, indifferent, but active, dynamic, warm and full of life—a life which pours itself into our parched souls with eager rush—a love which responds to our advance and far from waiting and holding back, rushes to meet us and overwhelm us. In prayer and communion, to which we are driven in the very work in which we find ourselves engaged, we discover the Presence of our Master whom we are serving and who gives us power to the extent of our service—grace up to the measure of our need. Thus, doing His Will we come to know Him and gain an assurance otherwise unattainable of the truth of the doctrine He taught and the source from whence it arises.

This, then, is the message to an age of feeble spiritual life. We have not because we are not working up to and beyond our strength. His Grace is given and His Presence assured conditionally upon our activity in spreading the Gospel and extending the Kingdom unto the utmost bounds of East or West.

A WITNESS IN CREATIVE DEED

And surely this has always been God's witness of Himself to men, a witness in Creative *Deed*. The test of Christ's Divinity and the claim of His Judgeship lies in this direction. Some day we must give an account of the deeds done in the body, and the nature of the judgment is, we are told, to depend upon our organic relationship to Him, which again is tested by our organic relationship one to another in Him. If we are discovered to have touched any of the vast masses of men at a sensitive point in active, loving service, at that sensitive point where we have touched any of them, we have touched Him. He claims to stand in an all-inclusive relationship to men so that He cannot be numbered as merely one of them but is ideally all in all. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these least, ye did it unto Me." In our service to the stranger, the naked, the helpless, the sick, the outcast, the needy and the lost, we are doing His Will towards them : He is carrying out His Will to them through us : we through them minister unto Him. He, then, is the ever-active all-embracing Good Will—the Goodwill of a Heavenly Father, and we, in the submission of our wills to His, are fellow-labourers with Him in His Divinely-designed and glorious plan of salvation. His judgment upon our work, He tells us, will be carried out by an acid test of service on these lines.

And does He ask us to do what He refuses

Himself to undertake? Not so. The verdict of history vindicates His activity. The proof of His Work in the world is not far to seek. Ask of the generations that are past whence they derived their strength for the battle, question the saints as to the source of their inspiration. What answer do they give?

I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary and worn and sad ;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad.

Test Him again in the light of His creative activity in times past. He has wrought wondrously in this universe of time and space and at a certain point in the historical process, after a long preparation and a gradual revelation *He has intervened with decisive results* in the affairs of men and done a deed which has made the future of the world and of man's destiny other than it would have been or could have been had He not done what He did. The supreme proof of God in action is the Cross. The atoning work of Calvary is something the glory of which is no figment of the imagination, but still in our skies to-day. Sinners in all ages of Christian history rise up to testify to its efficacy, and to acknowledge that the glory of it subdues them to worship.

My sin—oh the bliss of this glorious thought !
My sin—not in part, but the whole,
Is nailed to the Cross, and I bear it no more ;
Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, O my Soul !

GOD HAS WROUGHT WONDROUSLY

God has wrought wondrously. Our fathers testify to His Work. And to-day there is a vast multitude amongst us who have the music of it in their souls, and can speak in no other language than that of a Hallelujah Chorus of the redeeming work of the Lamb and the forgiveness of sins through His Blood.

An intellectual certitude of His Divinity may be wanting, but a moral and spiritual conviction of its truth is the possession of all those who have found Him mighty to save, and who, taking Him at His word, have cast themselves in faith into the infinite mercy, and touching if it be but the hem of His garment, have been made whole. If He be not God Himself in the act of forgiving, we have still to reckon with the All-Holy God in the matter of our human transgressions, but those who have the evangelical experience and know the Gospel to be indeed "Good News," know also that their faith in Jesus Christ is faith in the Eternal—that in Him they find God and One who is Redeemer and Saviour.

Short of such an experience, so warm, so vital, so deep in its richness, it is not altogether wonderful that men are discovered who can and do pour ridicule upon the whole subject, and in self-satisfied pride prefer to regard (with Bernard Shaw) forgiveness as a beggar's refuge and wish, if they can, to pay their debts. But the biggest proof of the

present creative activity of the Creator to-day is the transformation He *still* works in human life, re-creating sinners into saints, lifting up the fallen and degraded, bringing the lost back and making us "new creatures" in Christ Jesus. Such transformations may stagger the intellect and provoke the scorn of the wise and understanding. No matter,

That thou shouldst love a wretch like me
And be the God thou art,
'Tis madness to my intellect
But music to my heart.

The joy of the experience is the incentive to all true Christian service. The measure of its reality can be tested in each one of us by the extent to which, in adoring gratitude, we are engaged as His servants in telling others of the Good News and labouring to bring all men unto the obedience of Christ whose we are and whom we serve.

WHAT IS THE ONE THING NEEDFUL IN THE CHURCH TO-DAY?

“There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?”—*St. John* vi. 8.

FOR us the primary significance of this miracle lies in its lesson of trust issuing in obedience. It is what God is asking imperatively from the Church to-day, and what He most requires. Trust in Him and obedience to His commands. Given these two from us and He can work through us on the world of human lives.

Consider the story. There is the multitude in obvious physical distress; a great company who have followed Him and become so absorbed in His gracious words and life-giving teaching that they have for the time forgotten the immediate necessities of life and now find themselves hungry and far away from the possibility of food supplies. His intense humanity must feel for such a need and prompt Him to satisfy it. The very fact that in their case they have sought first His Kingdom enables Him to add to that all other things without contravening His own dictum, “Man doth not

live by bread alone " ; " seek ye first the Kingdom of God." Yet He must needs work through human agency. He must use human resources, however meagre, to convey material and spiritual blessings. What human resources are available ? " There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes."

When I was pursuing the thankless task in the London Diocese of inspecting Church Schools in religious knowledge, I used to put the question to the children somewhat in this form : Suppose your parents sent you on some errand involving absence from home for a whole day, and gave you in a parcel sufficient food to last you till your return, and you met some one who asked you to give them food, how much would you give ? They could see from my eyes that it was useless to say in reply, " What we had got," so, as a rule, they risked a fall and answered, " Half, sir." " Yes, we ought to share what we have with those in need, true, but how much did this boy give ? " " All he had ! " Why ? It was difficult to get an answer, and indeed difficult for me to answer my own question, unless it be that there was something about the personality of the One in this case who made the request that won the boy's heart and made him risk his all for the winsome stranger ! It seemed a useless sacrifice in any case, and all the boy had to anticipate was to see others consume *his* food whilst he himself went without ! A futile procedure in any case, since so few could possibly benefit from his

self-denial. Yet he did what he was told, and the Master was responsible for the result.

TRUST LEADING TO OBEDIENCE

Trust leading to obedience. That is still the demand. I cannot but feel that in our failure to give Him these lies the secret of our want of success in spreading the Kingdom to-day.

There is a real danger in the efforts being made to substitute for trust and obedience our own man-made plans and schemes for the advancement of the Kingdom and the spread of Christianity. It is becoming increasingly clear that social reconstruction from below and political programmes for economic readjustment do not and cannot reach the root of our troubles, whether as individuals or as a nation, still less can they hope to bring about a changed Europe and a world peace. Why? Because the root evil lies elsewhere and deeper. What we have to reach is the springs of human action: what we have to bring about is a change of heart, and no legislation by Acts of Parliament and no social reforms, however drastic, can accomplish that. Assume for a moment that any one of the political programmes of the contending parties is carried out and results in a restoration of material prosperity to this country and the elimination of unemployment: assume even that a political instrument like the League of Nations can succeed in restraining the madness of nations when seized

by the war fever and convulsed by a frenzy of self-aggrandisement to take up arms against their neighbours—assume that we had a Socialist Utopia to-morrow, should we have advanced a step nearer to the Kingdom of God as a reality in human life and its affairs? Surely the very success of any such political devices and the carrying out to a triumphant conclusion of any such political programmes, still leave the central problem untouched and would still find the Church's task in the world unaccomplished and yet to be completed.

TRANSMUTED AND MULTIPLIED

Various dioceses, our own included, are summoned from time to time to a Week of Prayer and Self-denial. For what object? Primarily to deepen the Christian spirit of fellowship with God and consequently amongst ourselves as Christian brethren. Secondarily to help to supply those materials essentially necessary for the work of the Church. We have long ceased to despise the use of the material as the channel consecrated by God for the spiritual work of His Church. We rightly speak of money as the golden channel of service. Material resources are essential if the work of a great diocese is to prosper. Hence the summons, because of the multitudes and their needs, for us by self-denial to supply the five barley loaves and the two small fishes. Our effort seems so futile: the need is so great: the means so meagre. We are asked to put our offering into a small

envelope marked "Self-denial." I tremble to think of the amount to be put in under such a title. None the less, let us give what we can. It will disappear and be lost in a vast fund with a very impersonal title, "Diocesan Fund." In all probability we shall never see any result from our effort. Possibly a chance paragraph about a new mission-hall or church built in some poor district : of a new mission worker or assistant priest added to the staff of some outlying suburban district : mention of rescue and preventive work : of Church schools renovated and repaired—it is all so vague, so remote, seemingly so useless so far as our offering is concerned. Yet if we could only see the way in which our half-crown in the hands of the Master is being transmuted and multiplied in its effective spiritual blessing ! The eyes of faith issue from the act of trust and obedience and help us see the multitudes being fed with spiritual sustenance through the transmuted channel of the material means we have supplied. The Church's work still remains to be done so long as men carry burdens and bear scars which can be relieved and healed only by spiritual remedies. The Master's work through His Church is to minister to the mind diseased and to pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow. It involves nothing less than the supernatural transformation of sinners into saints. Its essence is a revelation of the reality of the spiritual right in the midst of our mundane and material existence. It is the proclamation and the revelation of the Kingdom to

ears dull of hearing and eyes blinded to spiritual light. It is the disclosure of the reality of the Living God and Father mediated to the souls of men in a redeeming act and a divine deliverance from the bondage of sin and the fetters of selfishness. It is the uplifting of men by a Divine act from the stuffy air of self-seeking into the more glorious and bracing atmosphere of self-sacrifice and service for others. This is the Church's task. To it the Master still summons His followers. The very difficulty of the work and the seeming impossibility of its accomplishment leads cynicism to the denial that human nature can ever be changed, and tempts even the very elect to despair and to search around for man-made remedies, social panaceas and political propaganda as substituted means for its accomplishment. So we refuse the demand for self-denial and put our trust in something we think is more plainly tangible and promises better results.

Still He waits patiently for our trust and obedience. Dare we trust Him with all we have and are? Dare we leave with Him the responsibility for a successful issue, and even whilst we cannot see the "distant scene" or form the remotest idea of *how* He will accomplish the miracle and change human lives, yet in trust be content to obey His voice and say, "One step enough for me"?

TWO REWARDS

If we do so we find two rewards: (1) Inner peace which flows from a mind and heart and will

in accord with His ; and (2) the absolute certainty that we are on the right path ; and the knowledge that we can claim His grace for our tasks, and ask for it in full assurance that it must be given in accordance with our need.

The principle holds good for all our work in His service, whether we be clergy or laity makes no difference. The responsibility for results is His entirely, provided only that we are obedient. Think, for example, of our Sunday School classes and the seed sown in our Bible circles in hours of self-denial given on a Sunday afternoon after a hard week's office routine. Do we see any results proportionate to our efforts ? Think of the devoted labour week in and week out on the part of faithful parish priests whose names are never seen in the public press and of whose deeds there never is or can be any public memorial, still less official recognition. Judged as the world reckons success or from the point of view of ecclesiastical patrons, there is little if anything visible to be shown by way of fruit. The Master's multiplication of the loaves and fishes is always an unseen act, and on the part of the human agent faith alone is left for his consolation—faith to believe that fruit is being reaped : that grace is working in other's hearts : that the seed sown *has* taken root, even though our eyes may never behold the harvest and, as so frequently happens, others will reap where we have sown. So also with all our acts of worship and our faithfulness to His command. " This do in remembrance of

Me." If we judged our communions and our prayer life by its visible results, we might well despair. If, again, we judged our witness for Christ by its visible effect upon the lives of those around us, who would believe our report, who would accept our testimony? No! the Christian life and work in the service of the Master is from this point of view the most seemingly thankless and useless task! There is no adequate return visible, and the world's prizes in other spheres of life are far more attractive and certainly plainer to be seen. We have, on the contrary, to be content to do our duty as privates in a vast army, knowing little or nothing of the plan of campaign, and destined to live and die without seeing any visible progress, still less any decisive victory! Yet *His* is the responsibility, not ours, and what a relief for us to know even that much, when we see what we think are, all around us, signs of defeat—the Church hopelessly discredited, its earthly leaders running hither and thither with no agreed plan of campaign, no singleness of aim, issuing discordant and conflicting orders, and held up to the world's ridicule as blind leaders of the blind. Judged from the point of view of a successful campaign, what shall we say of the results of the Church's effort in any single diocese in England to change human hearts and convert human lives? Reckon up for a moment the kind of material available for such a task, even assuming that a diocese possessed a spiritual leader capable of putting that material

to the best possible use ! Where will he find a really surrendered will and a wholly loyal heart in the service of Christ ? There is a lad here and a lass there ! an old man and a maiden, a young man and a woman, but what are they among so many ? Is it not rather truer to the actual facts to have to confess that the last thing we are prepared to do is to obey our spiritual pastors and masters ? Is not criticism rather our first and last word ? Are we not over-eager to spend time in explaining to others how much better the work would have been done, had *we* and not *they* held the spiritual overseership ?

FATAL LACK OF DISCIPLINE

There is, alas ! to-day in the Church of England a fatal lack of discipline amongst clergy and laity alike. We present before the eyes of men the spectacle of a disorganised and demoralised mob rather than that of a self-restrained and disciplined army. The multitudes go unfed whilst we spend our time quarrelling amongst ourselves as to who is best fitted to superintend the feeding.

Now suppose we try to pull ourselves together in this matter. Let us take it for granted that under the present system of State patronage and political wirepulling we do not get the best leaders possible. Let us accept the worst that can be said against the Bishops, Priests and Deacons ! Let us clergy cease to linger over the inner grievance against the Bishop or patron who consistently refused to estimate our importance and work at our own

valuation and preferred to pass us over for promotion in favour of others plainly, in our opinion, inferior and less qualified! Let us cease to spend our time in grumbling and idle gossip about the plain shortcomings of our spiritual leaders, and against the obvious shortcomings of our parish clergy. Let us take all this for granted, and then ask ourselves quite simply and frankly—Are *you* doing your allotted task as faithfully and effectively as you could? Are you sticking to your own job, and doing that from a really disinterested motive, with no thought of preferment, no knowledge of what the world or the local press thinks about you, but with the single eye fixed upon the Master and with the one desire—to please Him? Let the clergy face this question, and let the laity examine themselves and their work for the Church on the same lines. “What is the *real* motive which animates me in my capacity as Churchwarden, Sidesman, Parochial Councillor, Lay Reader, Sunday School teacher, Choirman, Server, Church worker, or simply as a member of the Church in an unofficial capacity? Am I disinterested in my service and wholehearted in my allegiance? Is His command my meat and drink? Are trust and obedience a vital reality or a sounding phrase in my life?”

THE MASTER'S QUESTION

The Master, I am convinced, is summoning the Church of England to some such heart-searching question. He has His eye to-day upon the multi-

tudes in their need. He is looking also for the lad with the five barley loaves and the two fishes. The material He needs is in *our* possession. Of that there is no question. What is lacking is our willingness to give it. The work halts and waits upon our hesitations and reservations; our half-hearted allegiance and personal jealousies. What can win us to give Him what He wants? Something in the way in which He speaks to us? The thrill of adoring love which comes to us as we meditate upon what He has done for our souls? Something of the winsome grace which still radiates from His Person and brings into our sin-laden lives the breath from the hills and the healing power of a new hope and the experience of a new life? Be the means by which He seeks to win us what they may, one thing is certain, viz., the sound of His voice to-day, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And upon our answer hangs the multitude waiting to be fed.

If we respond, what happens?

He takes us and *breaks* us, and the multitude is fed. But this spells out an ominous word—the Cross! Precisely! That is what the Church needs most to-day.

LIFE ETERNAL

" If a man die, shall he live again ? "—*Job xiv. 14.*

BETWEEN the long night of expectation and the dawning of the glorious light of Revelation there hangs a thick veil of darkness and dim shadows. Before the people that sat in darkness saw the great Light . . . there were many vague guesses at the truth . . . many inspiring ventures of faith . . . many hands stretched out unto God, feeling after Him in the twilight if haply they might find Him. So far back as we can penetrate into the records of the past, even amongst the lowest races of mankind, we find, in however crude a form, a belief in an invisible world and a life beyond the grave. Many living in the age of darkness before the coming of the Dayspring from on high to visit us dreamed of a future life and pictured the state of the dead and their existence in the realms above. Some with the eyes of faith and with a conviction born of the soul's anguish in bereavement looked through the door of Death and said, "*That is not the end.*"

The speculations of men of all ages of the world's

history have been at work upon this mighty problem of immortality and the verdict of unenlightened humanity was "a sublime probability" that beyond the grave there was a future life . . . that death is *not* the end of all things. It was a guess at the truth.

And as we look through the pages of the Old Testament and listen to the speculations of men who lived in times before the great light of the Gospel Revelation dawned there is one impassioned cry wrung from a soul in anguish of spirit which startles us !

Job was a man upon whom the hand of God rested in affliction. If you study the Book of Job you encounter the problem of suffering and you are face to face with a soul's tragedy. The man had lost all his wealth, had been bereft of his children, and was smitten with a foul and loathsome disease ; he was broken in spirit, grappling in the darkness with the insoluble problem of the world's pain and woe . . . in danger of losing his faith . . . driven to revolt against the seeming injustice of God's government of the world . . . fiercely challenging the actions of the Almighty in His dealings with him . . . sore tempted to curse his maker in the bitterness of his affliction. The man's life was wrecked and shattered. He longed for death as the slave panting under the heat longed for the cool evening to bring him rest. He had little or no hope left. Utterly broken by the sad recital of his woes, feeling that God was

his relentless, all-powerful, inscrutable enemy, and the cause of all his misery, he turned to his earthly friends for some sign of sympathy and compassion, and they failed him in his hour of need.

Then it was that like some animal in pain he moaned out a scarce articulate cry, stretched forth his hands in the darkness and gloom and hurled a question from earth up to the starry heavens above :

“ If a man die, shall he live again ? ”

and in that impassioned cry is summed up the question which has been wrung from the lips of millions of God's finite frail human creatures when face to face with the Angel of Death.

And, though Job's question, ascending through the darkness from a valley of shadows, and ringing through the vaults of heaven, entered into the all-listening ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth, *there was no answer!* There was Silence in Heaven until the fullness of time came.

And then one day, many, many years afterwards, on a lonely hillside, shepherds were watching their flocks by night. Picture the scene. A wonderful stillness over hill and valley broken only by the bleating of sheep . . . the calm and peace of evening after the rush and activity of the day are ended . . . the unclouded brightness of the Syrian sky with innumerable stars shining in the blue vault of Heaven . . . the solemn silence of night brooding over all . . . the evening shadows creeping on

apace . . . all Nature in repose and hushed to slumber . . . a deep and solemn harmony pervading hill and dale, and then suddenly !

Job's question was answered !

An Angel of the Lord stood by the shepherds "and the glory of the Lord shone round them : and they were sore afraid. And the Angel of the Lord said unto them, ' Be not afraid : for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people : for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord ; and this shall be a sign unto you ; ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.' . . . And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the Heavenly Host praising God and saying, ' Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom He is well pleased.' "

A wonderful song of Praise and Thanksgiving rings through the vaults of Heaven . . . the first and last melody of Heaven ever heard by mortal ears . . . the Birth of the Redeemer celebrated with hallelujahs by the Heavenly Host, and then . . . Silence !

The light fades from the hills. The dazzling glory vanishes. The thrilling song of Praise dies away. The earth is left once more in the shadow of night . . . The whole phenomenon was a momentary Vision—a great and startling revelation . . . a sudden lifting of the veil which separates the seen from the unseen . . . mortal ears filled

with Heavenly music . . . mortal eyes gazing upon the glories of the celestial heights . . . a glimpse of Heaven, and then silence . . . darkness . . . the shadows once again . . . the stars looking down upon the dark earth beneath . . . the shepherds standing in silent and unspeakable awe !

A momentary rending of the veil which separates the seen from the unseen . . . lasting but a minute, but that was quite enough !

What does it all mean ?

Simply the fulfilment of a Promise . . . the answer to a world-felt need . . . " Immanuel," " God with us."

And in that thrilling Song of Praise . . . in the ringing music and rejoicing which filled the angelic spheres was *the answer to Job's question*. The answer to humanity's question in the face of Death was given by the Birth of a little Child . . . the gift from the Father-heart of Mercy of our God, whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of Peace.

And that answer to man's instinctive yearning after immortality given by the Incarnation of One who came to abolish Death and to bring Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel . . . that answer was confirmed by His glorious Resurrection which we are commemorating to-day with joy and thanksgiving.

A great philosopher of last century, Auguste Comte (1798-1857), believed in what he called a "Religion of Humanity," and in the absence of any proof of the existence of God he taught that all men should worship "humanity" as their god.

And he held a theory of immortality somewhat as follows :

We must worship "Humanity," that is to say, the great Being consisting of all the men and women past, present and to come whose lives have been or shall be devoted to the well-being and promotion of the race. There were to be public Commemorations of these men and women, and for the due observance of these Festal Days he drew up a Calendar associating each day with some great name in the roll of mankind. There was to be an organised priesthood, a breviary of Services and Fetes, and as I said, a Calendar of the thirteen months of the re-adjusted year, each bearing the name of some towering personality in the past. There was also a list of retrograde wrong-doers reserved for public cursing on an appropriate day of malediction. Brethren, our hope of immortality lay in getting our names put on one or other of those lists !

Comte considered that the only *real* immortality to which men and women were justified in looking forward was a "subjective immortality;" our hope of immortality lay in joining the "Choir Invisible" of the great and the good whose names are cherished in the hearts of those who follow them, and whose influence will live to the end of time.

The dead live again only in the memory of those whom they knew upon earth or who knew them. So long as a dead person had relations or friends living on earth . . . so long as *living* people cherished his memory (from whatever cause) he lives, but when the world forgets him, when his name is forgotten, then he sinks back into the general consciousness and his individuality ceases.

Thus, my brethren, according to this theory, those whom I have buried in yonder cemetery, the workhouse paupers whose funerals were attended by no friends or relations, who were carried to their last resting-place unmourned by a single person . . . *such*, according to this theory, *are dead indeed!*

And permanent immortality is only reserved for the very few . . . men like Shakespeare . . . men whose names are likely to be remembered so long as the world lasts . . . the great benefactors of the Race . . . these are the immortals whose memories are revered by subsequent generations and who, though dead, yet speak to us from the past and live in our thoughts and hearts.

And I mention this theory of immortality because it has been revived in a modified form by Maurice Maeterlinck in his fairy play *The Blue Bird*.

There is a scene in that play called the "Land of Memory," a frightfully sad scene, I imagine. I have not seen the play, but have read it and had it described to me by a friend. In this scene two children in their search for the "Blue Bird" visit the Kingdom of the Past. And there, in the Land

of the Dead, they find their grandparents, their dead sisters and brothers. And the moment the children recognise them and recall them to memory, these dead people revive and live again.

And so the children are taught that the dead live again each time they are remembered by those whom they have left behind upon earth. Whereas if their loved ones in the upper world forget all about them they lie forgotten in the eternal sleep of Death.

Brethren, is *that* the kind of immortality to which you and I are looking forward in Christ Jesus? Is *that* the Easter message which I come to proclaim to you to-night in the Name of the Lord?

No, brethren, in the same playhouse, night after night to an audience of all sorts and conditions of men and women, rich and poor, young and old, joyful and sad, toil-worn and sorrowful, merry and indifferent, Christian and agnostic, critical and sceptical, God-fearing and sinful . . . to such an audience, yes, and to the children, the voice of a little child is answering Job's question in a far truer and deeper sense than the author of that Play perhaps realised. In direct contradiction to his memory-immortality theory the child's voice proclaims the Truth.

There is a weird scene in the Kingdom of the Past where the children in their search for the "Blue Bird" find themselves in a graveyard at night. They are trembling with fear because

they believe that at midnight the dead are to rise up out of the tombs. And the little ones crouch in the gloom and darkness waiting for the dread hour to strike. And at the sound of the midnight bell a wondrous transformation scene takes place. The deep darkness is slowly dispelled by the dawning of a wondrous new light and instead of the dead bodies, masses of lovely flowers spring up from the tombs. The gloomy graves and the dim light of the Kingdom of the Past are transformed into a dazzling garden of pure white lilies.

And one of the little children comes forward and whispers to a startled audience :

“ THERE ARE NO DEAD ! ”

But in what sense are the words true ?

Are there no dead because they have all returned unto the dust from whence they came ?

Are there no dead because they all live in the memory of those who are left behind to mourn them ?

Are there no dead because they have all long since become merged once more into the general consciousness and have lost their own individuality ?

Is *that* the Easter message ?

Brethren, let us leave Maurice Maeterlinck with his tombstones which deliver up to us not the dead we love, but fragrant flowers. Let us go for the Truth to *another graveyard scene* . . . a scene in a garden in the land of Judah twenty centuries ago. There on that first Easter morning, thirty-three years after the Birth of the Child-Saviour,

a lonely woman came seeking not a fragrant flower, however pure and sweet, but a *living* Master. There she stood, a pathetic figure at the door of a sepulchre. And doubtless Job's question was tugging at her heart-strings :

“ If a man die, shall he live again ? ”

A mighty love for the Master had drawn her to the tomb where in death's peaceful sleep, she thought, He lay.

And as she stands there, a strange figure draws near to her whose form she cannot discern because of a mist of tears blinding her eyes . . .

And presently . . . though no lily rises in miraculous fashion from the empty tomb, yet she hears a gentle voice . . . the old familiar voice whose sound to her is worth more than a wilderness of lilies ! It is the sound of a Voice that was still and on the Resurrection morning speaks once more . . . “ Mary ! ” “ Rabboni ! ” “ Master ! ”

“ There are no dead,” not because their ashes are scattered to the four winds . . . not because their dust is the soil from whence the lilies spring . . . *but* because God is not the God of the *Dead* but of the *living*. Because on that first Easter morning when those devoted women crept out in the early dawn to pay their last tribute of love and devotion to their *dead* Master . . . they found not a *dead* Christ, but a *living* Risen Glorified Saviour.

“ Behold, Jesus met them, saying, ‘ All hail ! ’ ”

That is the Easter Message ! And in that beautiful meeting and recognition between Jesus

and Mary is a prophecy of the future meeting and reunion of all those hereafter who in this life have truly loved and parted for a while.

“ If a man die, shall he live again ? ”

The child-voice answers, “ There are no dead.”

“ I am the Resurrection and the Life,” saith the Lord, “ He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.”

CLAIMS OF SPIRITUALISTS EXAMINED

" Now a thing was secretly brought to me,
And mine ear received a whisper thereof.
In thoughts from the visions of the night,
When deep sleep falleth on men,
Fear came upon me, and trembling,
Which made all my bones to shake.
Then a spirit passed before my face ;
The hair of my flesh stood up.
It stood still, but I could not discern the appearance thereof ;
A form was before my eyes :
There was silence, and I heard a voice, saying . . ."—*Job* iv. 12.

COMMENTATORS upon this passage have pointed out its pre-eminence in the world's literature as a vividly dramatic description of an experience of the presence of a ghost.

The lesson which Eliphaz wishes to impress upon Job is one which he himself learned at a price. The cost was his own experience of all the paralysing effects which an apparition produces upon a human beholder. We have all the physical effects of terror, the fear and trembling, the shaking of the bones, the icy thrill, the heart's palpitation. We have the psychological effects, the awe and horror which possesses us when, without hearing, seeing or feeling the presence of the uncanny we know that we are not alone. Something or somebody is in

the room. Then the alertness of mind, the keenness of strained attention due to fear, the effort to pierce through the empty space in front of us, the gradual discernment by the mental vision of an outline, an appearance and at last vaguely visualised, a *form*, vaguely felt, a *breath*, the nearer presence of a spirit. Then a period, seemingly an eternity, of intense and felt silence, and then, horror of horrors, a *voice*.

Eliphaz is evidently one whom we are accustomed to-day to call a medium, possibly able to pass at will into a trance. He suffers an eclipse of the normal waking consciousness, such as we are familiar with in the case of involuntary or induced hypnotic trance. Evidently in his case it was a night vision, when the external world was hushed to stillness and the sounds of the busy crowd had died away. The body is still, the mental life active ; there is an intense functioning of brain centres below the level of consciousness and an abnormal psychical action. Whether the case of Eliphaz was spontaneous or induced, normal or pathologic, we are not told. Suffice it that he undergoes the experience with all its attendant strain of body and mind. Call it a dream, a mental vision or an abnormal psychical experience, the fact remains that he writhes in an unspeakable terror with all the tension of the nervous system which accompanies our distracted human nature when in the presence of the impalpable and unknown spirit world.

All this in order that he may become possessed of a supernatural revelation, that he may discover what no amount of normal human research can bring to light ; that he may be the possessor of a divine revelation and the learner of the secrets of the Almighty. Now we may rightly expect that after an experience of this kind, and in view of the cost to himself, Eliphaz will be able to give his friend Job a message of vital import, a revelation of a stupendous character concerning the ways of God with men, something Job sorely needs in his suffering and distress.

WHAT WAS THE REVELATION ?

Let us, then, turn to the text to see what the revelation is which the spirit gives to Eliphaz under these abnormal and soul-distracting circumstances : " There was silence, and I heard a voice saying, Shall mortal man be more just than God ? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker ? Behold, He putteth no trust in His servants ; and His angels He chargeth with folly."

Need we read further ? We expect a startling and novel message, something never guessed or dreamed of before. We find a familiar thought. No creature can be spotless in the sight of His Maker. Even the angels are foolish in His sight. How much more man born of the dust and brief of life, here to-day and gone to-morrow !

Is this original ? Have we here something of

a "New Revelation"? Has the hypnotic trance rent the veil between the seen and the unseen and wrested away a secret hitherto withheld from mortal man?

Are we any the wiser for Eliphaz's revelation? We have seen what it cost him to get it. Was it worth while? We needed no such vision to assure us that mortal man is not more just than God. Our seven-year-old children could have told us as much, and our conscience convinced us of the fact that we are less pure than God Himself, even the best amongst us.

QUARREL WITH SPIRITUALISM

Here, then, is our quarrel with Spiritualism. Is there a single line of information, for example, in all the hitherto published revelations of the Spiritists or the automatic writings which cannot be found much better expressed in the works of Emanuel Swedenborg? He is far better worth study than anything written in these days. Mrs. Browning wrote long ago a tribute to the seer of Stockholm in which she said that to her mind "the only light that has been cast on the other life is found in Swedenborg's philosophy." Let us study him, then, if we must read literature of this kind. And yet in him we shall find no single thought of any consequence which it was not within the competence of a human mind to conjecture or to infer concerning the conditions of the life after death.

This, then, is our first complaint. The revelations of the Spiritists contain nothing new. Nay, much of it is bizarre and foolish to a degree. The Dean of St. Paul's has summed up the whole effort in a sentence when he tells us that "Psychical research is trying to prove that eternal values are temporal facts, which they can never be." If we are told that the very triviality of the communications is evidence in their favour, owing to the extreme difficulty the spirits experience in communicating, we can only say that if the net results of their efforts so far is to give us no fresh light whatsoever concerning the next life and much which makes it appear that the future holds for us something less than the level of spirituality to which the saints even here have attained to, then is it worth the cost? Because what is involved? Spiritualism has its cost. It has grave moral dangers both for mediums and sitters. The verdict of Dr. S. M. Robertson, Medical Superintendent of the Royal Hospital at Morningside, Edinburgh, the chief asylum in Scotland, has been quoted more than once, but it will bear repetition: "The manifestations of mediums, supposing them to be honest, are, if not morbid, yet closely related to manifestations of mental disease that have no element of the occult about them; that indulgence in practices of a spiritualistic nature is apt to awaken a dormant proclivity to hallucination in those who inherit a tendency to nervous disorders; that the belief in Spiritualism merges into unmistakable delusion,

so that in some cases it is impossible to say where the one ends and the other begins ; that inquiries into Spiritualism in some cases lead to insanity, and may render permanent what might otherwise have been a temporary affection."

NEED TO DISTINGUISH

This is a grave consideration. We need to distinguish research in psychical phenomena from Spiritism as a substitute for religion. Even if it be legitimate for professional mediums to sacrifice themselves in the cause of scientific investigation, and they are content to run the personal risk attendant upon the inevitable weakening of self-control and personal responsibility due, as we are told, to trance mediumship, yet what are we to say concerning the sitters ? If we allow mediums in the interests of research to suffer, ruling out, of course, the degradation involved in the pursuit of sensationalism for mercenary ends, is not an earnest warning needed to those whose poignant grief has led them to seek by such means a point of contact or even a tangible proof that the dead have not ceased to be ? Do they seek to disturb the rest of the departed ? At what a cost and with what result ? First the cost, what Eliphaz suffered. The nervous strain, the physical horror, the mental torture, all in order that a message may come containing no information worth considering and leaving the bereaved person distracted, restless, morbidly

anxious for more ; frequenting séance after séance, wandering like a ghost from house to house in search of a medium who can outdo a former one in the marvels of crystal vision, hypnotic trance, and the allied psychic phenomena. Is this the way of peace ? Is this the means of grace for the grief stricken ? Whose health of mind and body can stand the strain of an Eliphaz experience without suffering untold torture ?

Moreover, the verdict of experienced investigators on the problem is so far "Not Proven." The phenomena of psychical science are granted. The hypotheses to account for them are many. A remarkable article in the *Quarterly* for April 1920 warns us of what is involved if we accept the Spiritistic hypothesis. "If unknown Spiritual forces add their quota to known material forces, then the best designed bridges may fall, the strongest foundations may shift, water may flow uphill. An element of indetermination and doubt is everywhere introduced, for all the works of man are based on the material forces which he can control, and if they are subject also to unknown spiritual forces nothing any longer can be controlled ; chaos lies at the root of all things."

EXHAUSTING ALL HYPOTHESES

Well may we pause, then, to question whether we have exhausted all possible hypotheses before we are driven to accept that of the Spiritists and

to say that God has at last, after all these years, so far loosened His control over the spirits of the dead as to allow them to intervene in the affairs of this world and to introduce an unknown factor into our common life with all its attendant surprises leading to chaos and confusion. Far more likely is it that great strides will be made in the near future in the investigation of psychic phenomena, and science will be able to bring this field also, as it has done other fields of research, under known laws of the physical and mental world. Who doubts but that a perfectly natural explanation awaits psychic phenomena as the result of further study and strict investigation? The hypothesis of telepathy already covers a vast mass of seemingly inexplicable occurrences. We have only to wait an extension of this hypothesis to cover phenomena which, because found at present inexplicable, are rashly relegated, even by educated people, at once to the region of the abnormal, and stated to be due to the agency of discarnate spirits.

Now, here is our point. The distracted mother has pinned her faith on her boy's survival to some manifestation at a Spiritist séance, which to her seemed conclusive evidence. A year hence, five years hence, ten years hence, and science will prove conclusively that what was supposed to have been a communication from the unseen to that mother can be explained on perfectly naturalistic lines. What will be the state of that mother's faith and health? Her health undermined, the cost she

paid to get the message through the medium; her faith shattered since the medium is discredited. Is it worth such a cost and such a risk?

IS THERE NO BETTER WAY?

Is there no better way, no surer means of certainty that our beloved dead are safe? A still more excellent way show I unto you. Let us begin with God. Let us seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Let us seek communication with the dead by way of the royal road of communion with our Heavenly Father, "who knows our necessities before we ask and our ignorance in asking." By prayer we can gain the assurance of a Living Presence. In communion we can feel after and find Him in whom we live and move and have our being. With the ear of faith we can hear His voice, with the eye of faith discern His face, with the hand of faith touch if it were but the hem of His garment, and lo! we shall know with a conviction nothing can shake that He is. What would we more? What further by way of assurance? If Omnipotent Love really is, then no matter through what strange regions our loved ones are travelling, they cannot in the trackless paths of eternity drift beyond His love and care. They in Him are safe. Can we not trust Him with our treasures? Are they not safe in His keeping? Nay, more than that, such experience of *His* presence as we can have in prayer and communion

will cost us no physical terrors, no mental torture or nervous disorders. Feeling Him will not make us tremble and shake as did Eliphaz in the experience of the hypnotic trance. The presence of God brings not terror and distraction, fear and trembling, but rather a great peace, a calm of mind and heart which is ours when weary, worn and sad. We find in Him a resting-place, and He has made us glad.

And as we feel His hand raised in benediction over our heads as we kneel before Him, who shall say that in His love He will not allow our loved ones in Him to draw nigh also, and by a spiritual (not a physical or psychical) message communicate to us the sense of *their* presence so that we can echo the experience of one who, in the communion of saints, could say?—

“ 'Tis then I feel how near thou art,
 Thy face I almost see,
 When in the Eucharist I touch
 The Hand that touches thee.”

WHAT MAY WE EXPECT THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH?

“For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.”—*St. Luke xv. 24.*

WHAT is the ground of our belief that we shall rise again? that after death we shall live on in another world called heaven? We speak of death as a happy release for many who are stricken with disease. We note the marvellous change death can effect in the faces of our beloved—the lines of care erased, the countenance white and smooth as marble. We feel the suggestion of a great peace in the presence of the dead, and we conclude that they are at rest. Upon what ground? Because their bodies appear so? If the soul has left the body and is now free, does it follow that such liberty through death has brought with it rest of spirit? If the self is the same one minute after as one minute before death, then, surely, if it was restless this side of the grave, self-centred, indifferent to spiritual things, out of touch and harmony with God, it will be so the other side of the grave. What guarantee have we that death will work some marvellous change in the character and transform us in a moment from sinners into saints? If there

be a continuity in the essential selfhood of the man or woman through the change we call death, then the impenitent thief who spends his last moments here cursing God will presumably renew the cursing out of the body and persist in his essential character there as here.

IMMORTALITY WITHOUT GOD

The fact, of course, is that whilst an immortality without God is conceivable and even probable, the name we give it can only be the reality symbolised by the word "hell." We cannot divorce the Easter message from Calvary, nor expect to share in the benefits of the Lord's Passion if we remain unbelievers. If the great reality here, as there, be God, then eternal life consists in a relationship with Him; in such a union with God in Christ as shall secure for the believing soul all that is essential for its present spiritual health and its final salvation—in short, Heaven here and there. Eternal life is meaningless apart from that salvation made available for us through the sacrifice of Calvary. Consider the needs of the human soul in the search for its true well-being, and it becomes plain that they are such as only God Almighty can satisfy. In Him alone is to be found true rest. He alone can give us true life, and link us to that eternal love which is essential if this world and the next are to be to us in any sense a home and not a wilderness. Man's deepest need is divine forgiveness, reconciliation, and perfection. None of these things

can he give himself, or perform for himself, apart from God. It is a divine action all through which secures spiritual health. This is the real meaning of the Christian doctrine of the Resurrection. It makes possible the new birth, the death unto sin, which, as in the case of the prodigal, mean all that is suggested by the word "salvation" for each one of us. "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." It is a veritable resurrection of a lost soul; a fresh beginning and a new life, which man needs if he is to achieve perfection. It involves a Father's forgiveness, which must spring from a Father's love, but which none the less is indissolubly bound up with a Father's sacrifice and involves nothing less than a giving of life to the dead.

GREAT WORK OF THE FATHER

Consider the prodigal's need, and we come in sight of the great work the Father must do if the son is indeed to be restored. Dr. Glover has brought this out beautifully in his "Jesus of History." The boy returns home, and in the atmosphere of home and love is enabled to exhibit a true penitence otherwise unattainable, and to make a full confession impossible in the presence of an unloving severity and an accusing finger. Such a true penitence is the gradual divorce of the sinful self from the true—the repudiation of the sin by the true self—the cutting away from a sinful past. The prodigal, come to himself, clothed and in his

right mind, sees his sin in its true character as an alien and hateful thing which he repudiates, and from which he now shrinks in loathing and horror. The soul turns from darkness to light, from sin to God, from a self-centred egoism to a filial devotion. The wasted years, however, in the far country, have left their mark. The ravages of sin have yet to be reckoned with. Is it possible that the barren and wasted life can be restored? Can the past be so transmuted in the present as to be in its effects as if it had not been? Nothing but a miracle of divine grace can so transform the consequences of the past as to bring good out of evil, and to change a barren waste into the garden of the Lord. Whatever the past as past may be as a fact of history, done and unalterable, the fact remains that the prodigal in the home can begin a new life, so overshadowed by and guided by the divine love as to make his future life wholly different from what it would have been had he remained in the wilderness and allowed the influences of evil to have free play in the building up of his character to the end. There is now for the penitent the promise and the assurance of an invigorated manhood; a gradual restoration of the years which the locusts have eaten. Is this a fiction? Is it not the record of a daily experience, of salvation known by those who have given themselves in penitence to the influence of the divine love and have felt its transforming effects in their lives? Surely this is what God in Christ Jesus is doing every day for penitent souls, and it opens

out before us a vision of what the next life may have in store if we continue to possess His love as an active, dynamic, sin-expelling, grace-bestowing, life-giving power within us all the days. We have, in fact, the assurance that He who hath begun a good work in us will continue it until the day of Jesus Christ. It opens up before us a vision of final perfection, final reconciliation with a sinful past, final restoration of all we have flung away in our blind folly, the robe and the ring, the lost inheritance.

OUR REAL NEEDS

Question the soul as to the real cause of its restless unhappiness, and we find that our real needs are deliverance from conscience-stricken memories of past failures, lost chances, neglected opportunities, misused talents ; our knowledge of our own inability to overtake or to stay the consequences of our sins, either to ourselves or in the lives of those who have been implicated in them and caused to stumble by the contaminating effects of our misdeeds. We want, moreover, the explanation of life's experiences ; the unravelling of the tangled threads of our lives ; light upon the problems of this world ; freedom from the limitations inherent in our finite existence in time and space ; room for expansion. We are, in our best moments, conscious of boundless possibilities of a higher becoming ; humbled at times by the discovery of hidden possibilities for good or evil in the depths of our distracted human nature—the capacity to love infinitely and be loved.

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped ;
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me.

True salvation must be adequate to satisfy all these needs and minister to all these aspirations, the height and depth of human life.

MEANING OF THE RESURRECTION

Now the Resurrection means such a continuity between this life and the next in Christ Jesus as shall conserve in Him all that was of worth and precious in our life here which we have given unreservedly into His hands when we abandoned all that we have and are to Him in the experience of salvation. The resurrection of the believer in Christ has in it the promise of the carrying forward into the far future of the lost treasures. There is in our lives an activity of the Almighty love which can gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost—a love which, because it is divine love, can discern all in our past which has gone to the making of our life really happy—all we have valued in past experience as of worth ; all that ministered to our true happiness and well-being—in short, life's worth and treasures for me—human ties, family affections, friendships, experiences rich in blessing and to memory dear, aspirations after the good and pure, struggles after the noble and sublime, the thoughts too deep for tears and the joys too soul-stirring for articulation. All that is

of essential worth in the past life divine love can gather in our lives here and conserve for us through the gate of death. We have His promise—"Nothing shall be lost."

ALL THINGS NEW

Nay, more than this, we have His promise, "Behold I make all things new." He will gather up these fragmentary experiences, take my imperfect life, with all its irregularities and incompleteness, and fashion it anew into something glorious—all I could never be. We have even here in this life an insight into love's marvellous power to bring good out of evil, and to fill the sinful but penitent soul with the sense of a presence and a power which is nothing else but creative of new life, new hope, new strength, new inspiration; making the past in the present as if it had not been; taking the regenerate man out of his false self into the discovery of his true being and eternal welfare. If God's love can do this much for us here, we can dare to conjecture what He can and will do for us hereafter. A man can be here and now a "new creature" in Christ Jesus. The prodigal can be here and now in this life, "ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven." The praises of the Lamb are now being sung by faithful and grateful hearts in our midst. With an experience such as this to guide us, need we be in any doubt as to what heaven will be like? Life in God here, eternal life in the midst of time, is our foretaste, this side of the grave, of what the

future holds in store for the redeemed in ever fuller measure. We can argue from a present experience to a future perfection of what we now taste in measure, the knowledge of God which is life indeed. The new birth and the process of sanctification in Christ Jesus, as the veritable benefits of His Passion conferred now upon the believer, are the key to the real meaning of eternal life hereafter. In His abiding presence here there is a Sabbath rest for the people of God—a foretaste of that eternity He has placed in our hearts.

A TRANSFORMING POWER

This is the great truth which St. Paul seized upon in his experience of the risen Lord. It was the sense of an active presence and transforming power of a new life within him which made him devote his whole soul to the one thing worth achieving—the resurrection of the dead. It was the foretaste of this experience which urged him on to the attaining of that perfection he felt Christ had begun to achieve in him. Towards that goal he pressed on as the bloodhound upon the trail, *having caught the scent*. “Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect; but I press on.”

Here we have the disciple pursuing the way of the Master, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame. In the power of His life the apostle can do all things and become a new creature. Such can also be the

experience of the humblest Christian, finding in a living faith in Christ Crucified a redemption, deliverance, restoration and new life, the experience of which is the taste of immortality—the pledge of something eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the mind of man to conceive, what the Lord God hath prepared for them that unfeignedly love Him.

Eternal life, then, is essentially a relationship with the Living God in Christ, and in Him the hallowing of all we hold dear and cherish for ourselves and others, and which goes to the making up of our true selves as citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. Its fruition for the believer will consist in an ultimate perfection, a refashioning of the self into the likeness of God our Father. Towards that consummation we are bidden by the great apostle to press on, that we also may attain to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

FOR WHOM IS ETERNAL LIFE?

Now if this or anything like this is the essence of eternal life, for whom is it available? Is it to be automatically bestowed upon all, the other side of death, independently of any relationship they may have with God? Is it an inheritance we can claim as ours by right and demand from Him, apart from any question of the soul's relationship to the things of heaven? Is it, for example, the sure and certain hope of all unbelievers? There is a widespread idea amongst us to-day that heaven is assured for

all because of God's abounding love ; that none can therefore fail in the end to attain unto the resurrection of the just or fall short of the fullest blessings God can and must bestow. We need to be reminded that nothing could be more plainly taught in Holy Scripture than the fact that a living faith is the essential condition of salvation ; that for the impenitent there is no forgiveness possible, since the essential forgivableness of the sinner prevents God's atoning work from taking effect. Whence, then, this optimism which gaily and light-heartedly repudiates all commerce with God as unessential for the attaining of a future life of bliss, and thinks that a godless or indifferent life here is none the less sure of the benefits of His Passion ? There is a levity abroad which is due to the repudiation of the old crude conception of hell-fire, and which has gone to the other extreme in its rejection of any judgment or punishment, as incompatible with that conception of God's character which an age of sentimentality hugs to its breast in an ecstasy of self-complacency. Yet nothing, surely, could be more awful in its suggestiveness of the consequences of sin than the cry of dereliction from the cross : " Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani ! "

WHAT SIN MEANS

Explain it or explain it away as we choose, there is still the hint of what sin really means in its ultimate issue—alienation from God ; the outer darkness ; the weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Even if we argue that Christ experienced this awful consequence in our stead, and as the Sinless One endured in our place, as our substitute, the sting of death ; that the awful cry was wrung from His lips in order that we might escape the necessity of uttering it ourselves ; granted that there is an element of substitution in the Calvary sacrifice ; that in some sense He died so as to enable us to escape the last dread consequence of sin in the "second" death—the death of the soul—yet nothing could be clearer than the fact that *believers* are the people who are in Him to escape so great a condemnation. It is nowhere stated that the unrepentant and unbelieving are to share in the benefits of His saving work ; to escape as brands from the burning, apart from any change of attitude on their part towards the God whom they have scorned and rejected. Where is the warrant in Holy Writ for the assumption that both thieves, penitent and impenitent, were received into the Paradise of Jesus ?

FADING OF THE CROSS

Surely, in view of the fact that the cross, in its essential saving significance, has to so large an extent faded out of the lives of many in our midst (as is shown in a hundred ways to-day), we do well to ponder again on the grounds of our assured optimism in a final salvation for all men, apart from their exhibiting a living faith in the Crucified. If our pulpits have ceased long ago to proclaim the

Judgment in terms of hell-fire to frighten people, it is time to warn men of a reality of which hell-fire was an imperfect and crude symbol ; and to remind ourselves that we do not get rid of unpleasant facts when we have revolted against names or repudiated the symbolism in which the facts were at one time clothed for the warning of perishing souls. The warning note can never be absent from the Church's teaching for any length of time without giving rise to a false sense of security which we have no warrant from the Bible to justify us in assuming to be ours as sinners in the sight of God. It is the duty of the Church to preach, in season and out of season, unpleasant truths ; whether the world will pay heed or no is another question.

ASLEEP IN A FALSE SECURITY

Many souls at present are asleep in a false security because we have failed to utter Christ's warning. The recent discussions on the nature of the life after death have been a sad eye-opener to many of us as to the real desires of men and their real conception of what constitutes true happiness in the world to come. Judging from the evidence available, it would seem that God holds very little place in the modern man's apocalyptic vision. A Paradise of an earthly kind without Jesus ; a re-duplication of this life, with all its tendencies to self-enjoyment on a larger and more selfish scale than exists even here, would seem to be the dream of many a misguided life to-day when it speculates

upon the good time coming the other side of death. Life's true values and life's true needs seem to be sadly overlooked. A life here without any real first-hand knowledge of God and His influence upon the soul leads to the anticipation of a heaven in which He finds no necessary place. Yet He must either be sovereign lord over the whole life, past, present, and to come, or be relegated to the realm of an abstract proposition, an hypothesis for which we see no need. This is a life frankly godless. Its issue is at long last spiritual death. From that danger Christ died to save us. The cost was great because the danger was in God's eyes, if not in ours, something awful. The cry of the lost was, to Him if not to us, something inconceivably awful, and something from which He was prepared to save us at a great price. That price He paid. That salvation he still offers. But not even He can save us against our wills. The joy of the redeemed is in proportion to their sense of the peril from which they have been delivered and the greatness of the price paid. The final wreck of a human life, so fair in its promise as God designed it, is a thought unendurable to us in our serious reflection upon the meaning and value of finite individuality; how much more must it be in God's thought!

"I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth," saith the Lord, "therefore turn yourselves and live."

THE PROBLEM OF JUDAS

"He then having received the sop went out straightway : and it was night."—*St. John* xiii. 30.

THIS writer's metaphorical use of the contrast between light and darkness suggests here a spiritual significance as attaching to the awful sentence : "it was night." Very shortly Judas by self-destruction was to pass out into a darker night, the abode of lost souls. We are left to imagine the fate of the traitor. We are left also with the question : "Is it to be a perpetual night ?"

Many have felt strangely uneasy when reading the story of Judas. There are suggestions that he was the victim of an inexorable fate, the instrument of an evil spirit, the tool of a tragedy fore-ordained. He was predestinated to destruction. Can he then be held responsible ? Did not his Master Himself say : "The Son of Man goeth, even as it is written of Him : but woe unto that man through whom the Son of Man is betrayed ! Good were it for that man if he had not been born."

A careful study of the narrative,* however, reveals the fact that whilst in a sense the Christ was predestined to be betrayed, it by no means

* *E.g.* Bernard, "The Central Teaching of Jesus Christ," pp. 74-87.

follows that Judas Iscariot was bound to be the betrayer. There was enough evil and malice in the world then, as now, to make it certain that the Son of Man must needs suffer. Love must ever suffer in a sinful world, but the particular instrument through whom the deed of betrayal should be done, was uncertain, may we say up to the very moment of the betrayal?

POSSIBILITIES OF A DISCIPLE

Satan did not possess Judas from the first. The Christ Himself saw in him the possibilities of a disciple, the material out of which might be fashioned one of the saints of God. The career of Judas was dependent all through upon his own free acquiescence in an evil choice. It has been well said of him that he "acted like Satan, but like a Satan who had it in him to become an Apostle." There were possibilities of good and evil within the man, and the issue depended still upon the line he himself chose to follow. We gather that he had the tendency to covetousness, with its issue in deceit and theft. He joined the Apostolic band, sharing to a large extent their hopes and fears. We know how worldly and materialistic those hopes were: how they dreamed of an earthly kingdom in which they themselves should occupy the chief seats; how they hoped that their Messiah would use His miraculous power to compel belief and overcome all opposition. Gradually they were forced to understand that He would adopt no such means and

win His crown by no such methods. To Judas this seemed more and more clearly the way of madness and the inevitable issue, defeat. If the Master persisted in the way of the Cross, all was lost and the disciples involved in the inevitable *dénouement*. Hence to him, as to many before and since, the Cross became a stumbling-block. It spelt disaster and engendered despair. Judas thus yielded to the lower side of his nature. He descended to petty theft and revealed the trend of his thoughts in the objection to the apparent useless waste of precious ointment. Even the little earthly reward for spiritual service which the Master was offered in the free gifts of thankful hearts was uselessly thrown away, so thought Judas. Surely the labourer was worthy of his hire, and there was no need for Jesus thus to refuse the material wealth offered as a just recompense for spiritual service rendered. Such we imagine to have been the trend of his thoughts, and, like Gehazi before him, he determined at any rate to secure something for himself in spite of the other-worldliness of the One whom he served. The Master's rebuke in commending rather than condemning Mary's action stung him, and he yielded himself still more to the sway of the evil passions, envy, ambition, covetousness, wounded pride. We need not pursue the story in detail to discover the simple fact that the process by which Judas passed in the end completely under the control of the evil spirit was *a gradual* one, and at any point in that process it was still

within his power, though in ever-lessening degree, to throw off the yoke of Satan and reclaim his birthright as a child of God.

And so he sold his soul to Satan. He was not utterly hardened as to be incapable of remorse. He went and hanged himself because he had not the courage to face the consequences of his sin. He passed out into the night. He leaped all unprepared into the presence of his Maker. We are left to pray for ourselves and all others who are potential saints or betrayers of the Lord :—

“ From all evil and mischief ; from sin ; from the crafts and assaults of the devil ; from Thy wrath, and from everlasting damnation,

“ Good Lord, deliver us.”

IS THIS THE FINAL WORD ?

Everlasting damnation. Is this the final word ? The question is not so remote from our own daily lives as we think. In the case of every one of us there is a vast latent capacity for good or evil. Our hereditary endowment is complex beyond the possibility of unravelling. We are told that “ the modern study of heredity suggests that our personalities are made up of many strands which go back into antiquity, and which have a unique combination for each individual.” * And again, “ the immergence of a given ancestral strain is incalculable. The immediate forbears and the more remote are but collaterally related to the

* Cf. J. A. Thomson, “ System of Animate Nature,” vol. ii., pp. 495 ff.

descendants. . . . It is the stock, the germ, that matters. Little of importance can be learned by the study of father and mother alone. . . . You cannot tell which influence is strongest in you ; at any rate the result is mixed. . . . The inherited qualities are certainly too numerous all to find expression in a single lifetime. . . . A man inherits capacities for a dozen different lines in life. One among these is realised by suitable training. . . . Nurture can only develop what is there, and it draws out one or more of a multitude of capacities. And, if this is true of the broad and definite capacities which are required by certain modes of life and livelihood, it is also true of the very numerous and subtle capacities which are used or left unused in the cultivation of virtues or evil character. For character is not the same thing as temperament. Character is both defined and realised by the manner in which a given temperament is managed in given circumstances." * Apart from all its exaggerations, psycho-analysis is certainly opening our eyes to the possibilities and reminding us of the hidden depths of our distracted human nature. We are all potential saints or satans. We know not what the morrow may bring forth, or whether our neglect of watchfulness, self-discipline and the means of grace may not find us suddenly placed in such circumstances as may awaken within us latent tendencies to evil, and fan into flame passions the very existence of

* Art. "Heredity," "Dictionary of Religion and Ethics," p. 609.

which are unknown to our normal waking consciousness ; tendencies which need never have come to birth, but which spring to life because of our overweening confidence in our own strength against evil. Hence the Lenten summons to dying men in need of daily grace with the spectacle all around us of normal human beings swept off their feet by the gusts of passion, and hurried to crime, murder, suicide, or execution before they are barely awake to the power of the temptations into which they have fallen.

ULTIMATE FATE

What are we to say of their ultimate fate, the other side of death ?

Hell is a certainty, but is it to be an eternal Hell? In the first place we have the certainty of a final Judgment, on the authority of our Lord's own teaching and the confirmation of our own conscience. We know also that the moral issues of this life are vital to our well-being in the life to come. Nothing could be clearer than the scriptural warning that it is the deeds done in the body here during our time of probation, and not the deeds done out of the body in an " intermediate " state, which will constitute chiefly, if not exclusively, the subject of future judgment. Every act, thought, and deed, every idle word here and now adds its quota to the building up of a character to be judged hereafter in the light of its capacity for eternal life in God. Hence our daily acts are fraught with

momentous consequences, eternal significance, endless possibilities for good or evil. Our final Heaven or Hell will be not of God's making or willing, but our own.

Again, Love's Omnipotence can never employ anything but Love's methods to win our allegiance. It follows that an evil will can continue to resist the Divine after the death of the body, and God Himself cannot alter it by any force short of moral and spiritual suasion. We do well, therefore, in the light of scriptural teaching, to bear these and other considerations in mind as we approach the question of the possibility of a final restoration for a lost soul. Final restoration does not mean that Hell will be avoided. Hell must be endured. The question is for how long. If we think in terms of time, is it for ever? If we think in terms of spiritual states of being, is it to be an eternal state, or is it to issue in something positive beyond Hell? Granted then the existence of lost souls the other side of death, granted the reality of Hell, is it a finality? Is it an ultimate state of being? Is it the last word of Holy Love? Is perdition a final state?

Now amidst much which has been written in our time on this question, there is one point which may be stressed.

If final peace and blessedness is God's last word; if the final triumph of good over evil is His design and purpose; can there be an eternal Hell side by side with an eternal heaven?

CONTRARY TO PURPOSES OF GOD

In a rational Universe can you postulate the eternity of a negation? Goodness, Truth, and Beauty are positive concepts. They can be conceived of as ultimates, as the goal of a moral process, a manifestation of reality. But perdition is contrary to the issue which is purposed by God, and is the fulfilment of all unreal and negative things. Therefore, argues, for example, Dr. Leckie,* perdition cannot be ultimate, but must always merge in something beyond. Only if this be so, can its existence be justified as part of the rational Universe: in such a Universe nothing can remain which is not of itself a good, or does not serve a purpose of good. But a state of mere penalty cannot be said to be good in itself, nor can it serve a beneficent end if it endures for ever. If the intention of punishment is to work righteous retribution, and to show the nature of sin in its final issues, this does not require endless time for its fulfilment. Finite sin does not demand an eternity for its self-revelation, nor can it merit perpetual pain. The purpose of perdition must some time be achieved, and when this is accomplished, it must cease, in so far at least as it is a state of positive suffering.

There is then, according to this line of thought, a state beyond perdition. Retributive suffering must end in something. In what?

* "The World to Come and Final Destiny," part i., ch. iii., *passim*.

Either the final dissolution of the personal life or its final restoration.

Either annihilation or, as Dr. Leckie suggests, a *final spiritual privation*, which is none the less in its measure a *positive state*, the loss of the highest good on the part of a saved soul. There must be degrees of goodness, ranks of perfection in the final state. Judas may find a place in the final state, though it be a lowly one, and not that which he might have attained to, had he never sinned.

Either annihilation or partial restoration would conserve the positive character of the ultimate Kingdom. In the one case, the evil ceases to be by annihilation; in the other, it is overcome by good—the soul is saved through fire and also it suffers permanent loss. It reaches a positive state on a lower level to that which it might have gained, had it never sinned.

On the hypothesis of the imperishability of the soul as such, annihilation is difficult to imagine: if, however, we think in terms of a creational concept, if the soul had a beginning, it can be conceivably extinguished. Immortality then becomes an achievement, not a right of the soul as such. Some souls will reach to perfection and win immortality; others will fail. Provided we conserve the sum of the vital soul-force in the Universe, we can quite well think of individual centres of its manifestation in finite souls enduring for a while and then becoming disintegrated. The finite centres have their day and cease to be, the vital force persists. So the

punishment of those who fail to achieve permanence is the loss of *personal* immortality, which is equivalent to annihilation in their case. There may be then a spiritual dust-heap, the matter of which can quite well be used again for the production of new forms. There is much to be said for the doctrine of annihilation on these lines, and the suggestions of a possible disintegration of human personality even in this life in the phenomena of dual or multiple-personality are significant in this connection.

WHAT ABOUT PARTIAL RESTORATION ?

What can be said for the alternative, viz., the final partial restoration of the lost soul after Hell is ended ?

It is *only the infinite value of the individual soul* as such in the eyes of infinite love, that makes us cling to a belief in *personal* immortality for all, as a final state. If God cares for us sufficiently to miss us, then our final disappearance would be a real loss and leave the ultimate Universe with something lacking. It would be incomplete without us.

Can God rest content to re-create new forms from the spiritual dust-heap ; to use afresh the waste products which once formed what was myself, and to put this in His treasury as a substitute for unworthy me ?

Must the Potter be still the figure under which we conceive God as working ? Or is the analogy

fatally defective in the light of God's character as the Lover of the individual as such ?

If we, in our imperfection, find it hard to conceive of a state of bliss for ourselves with the memory of one lost soul to haunt us, one whom we loved and failed to win over to the paths of God and salvation, is our ethical instinct altogether at fault when it creates within us at least a hope.

That nothing walks with aimless feet ;
That not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete.

What then of Judas ? Is his winter to change at long last ; his darkness to yield to light ? Is Divine Love incapable of such a faith and hope in our sinful and diseased human nature ?

SOME REMARKABLE LINES

Consider in this connection the following remarkable lines of Agnes Lee in "New Voices."* The poem is entitled "Motherhood."

Mary, the Christ long slain, passed silently,
Following the children joyously astir
Under the cedrus and the olive-tree,
Pausing to let their laughter float to her.
Each voice an echo of a voice more dear,
She saw a little Christ in every face ;
When lo ! another woman, gliding near,
Yearned o'er the tender life that filled the place.
And Mary sought the woman's hand, and spoke :
" I know thee not, yet know thy memory tossed
With all a thousand dreams their eyes evoke
Who bring to thee a child beloved and lost.

* Published by The Macmillan Co., New York.

" I, too, have rocked my little one.
 Oh, He was fair !
 Yes, fairer than the fairest sun,
 And like its rays through amber spun
 His sun-bright hair.
 Still I can see it shine and shine."
 " Even so," the woman said, " was mine.

" His ways were ever darling ways "—
 And Mary smiled—
 " So soft, so clinging ! Glad relays
 Of love were all His precious days.
 My little child !
 My infinite star ! My music fled ! "
 " Even so was mine," the woman said.

Then whispered Mary : " Tell me, thou,
 Of thine." And she :
 " Oh, mine was rosy as a bough
 Blooming with roses, sent, somehow,
 To bloom for me !
 His balmy fingers left a thrill
 Within my breast that warms me still ! "

Then gazed she down some wilder, darker hour,
 And said—when Mary questioned, knowing not :
 " Who art thou, mother of so sweet a flower ? "—
 " I am the mother of Iscariot."

DR. HADFIELD'S VIEW

Had we forgotten that Judas had a mother ?
 In a stimulating essay on the " Mind and the Brain " Dr. J. A. Hadfield has reviewed the question of the belief in a future life from the scientific point of view, and in the light of evolution he tells us that it is only the few who progress, the many remain unevolved. So may it be, he says, in the passage from the physical to the spiritual, and he calls attention to the strange figure in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* of the " Button Moulder." The moulder informs Peer on his return from his wanderings

that as his life had been spent to no purpose, as he had failed to fulfil the object of this life's pilgrimage, viz., to develop an individuality, he was neither good enough for Heaven, nor bad enough for Hell. His fate would therefore be to be boiled down again in the same melting-pot as Tom, Dick, and Hal, and so form raw material again. "Such may be the destiny," says Dr. Hadfield, "of those who never pass upwards. They have never grown personalities; they have not become individuals in the highest sense; they have, therefore, failed in the main purpose of their lives. They were intended to gain the mastery over their senses and develop minds capable of dominating the body. Instead, even to the end, they are completely under the mastery of their senses, in which they find their only joy. These profane persons, like Esau, sell their birthright for a mess of pottage. What will happen to them? Since they have chosen not to develop that 'soul' with which they were endowed into personalities in touch with the eternal, their end may be to pass back again into the melting-pot to be boiled down with the rest (for the Master of the Universe wastes nothing): they merely return to that nonentity from which they came: from them may be taken away even that individuality which they have."

So far Dr. Hadfield; and if we were dealing with impersonal laws and sequences, doubtless he is right. We must not, however, leave out of account human ties, human affections, human love.

There was hope for Peer in the fact that one girl remained faithful to him in spite of all his faults, and still loved him in spite of his base desertion and callous treatment of her. We may well believe that she will dispute with the " Button-Moulder " for the soul of the prodigal, and not without success, even as Beatrice finally won Faust.

A MOTHER'S LOVE

So with Judas. Some one at any rate cared for him. Some one remembered the dreams she had dreamed of him. A mother's love followed him, a mother's prayers interceded, a mother's faith still believed in him, in spite of all. In whatever region, then, beyond our ken, the soul of Judas now is, there we may well believe his mother's love also penetrates, his mother's prayers reach the Throne of Grace.

If I were hanged on the highest hill,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine !
I know whose love would follow me still,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine !

If I were drowned in the deepest sea,
I know whose tears would come down to me,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine !

If I were damned of body and soul,
I know whose prayers would make me whole,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine !

And God's love is not less than this !

THE END

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